

Chasing Unicorns

And catching them, with this
fun and practical meditation guide



TIPPY GNU

Chasing Unicorns

HYPERLINKED CONTENTS

1. HAPPINESS ISN'T FUN

2. ZOMBIE THEORY

Zombie Theory...Life is Automatically Enjoyed...When Bad Things Happen to Good and Bad People...A Cute Dog Story...Auto-Enjoyment Theory

3. DOMINATRIX THEORY

Motion Picture Theory...Dominatrix Theory...The ABC's of Focus...Practical Joke Theory...Real Estate Theory

4. UNIQUENESS (IT'S ONE-OF-A-KIND)

First, What the Heck is It?...Chinese Food Theory...Fat Torture Theory...Pain and Your Relatives...Virgin Investment Theory...Think Unique, and Feel a Thrill

5. UNICORN THEORY

Unicorn Theory

6. CHASING UNICORNS

An Open Mind...Be On the Lookout...Learning...Be Trustworthy

7. ON THE PATH OF UNICORNS

The Source...Mindfulness...The Practice...Formal

Mindfulness...Informal Mindfulness...Meditation Instructions...The Main
Benefit of Mindfulness...Other Benefits of Mindfulness...The Fount of
Life

GLOSSARY (List of Terms & Theories)

BOOKS BY TIPPY GNU

CHASING UNICORNS

And catching them, with this fun and practical meditation guide.

Tippy Gnu

Chasing Unicorns. And catching them, with this fun and practical meditation guide. Tippy Gnu, author.

Editions: 2021 (Portions first published as *Pumping Up Piglipple* in 2010 & 2019).



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HAPPINESS ISN'T FUN

Happiness isn't fun. Not during those times when we're unhappy. Most people are generally happy, most of the time. But we do have our moments. We can't always be happy, all the time.

But that's no excuse. In our society, you **MUST** be happy **ALL** the time, or else people will think there's something wrong with you. And they'll badger the hell out of you until you paint a fake smile on your face, just to get rid of them.

This can leave you wondering if there really might be something wrong with you. And so even though you're generally happy, you may seek ways to be happier. You may want happiness 24/7. Yes, you may want to be smiling, giggling, and chuckling, all day and all night long, just so you and everyone else will know that you're not insane.

And yet, this is much easier said than done. Boosting your level of happiness can be hard work. Happiness is fickle, and depends on many variables, so you can't just will it, and make it come true. In fact, you might rather try digging ditches, than work on improving your mood. Trying to be happier than you are, can be a dreadful chore.

People try many different techniques to improve their happiness. For instance, some search for their extra chuckles at the bottom of a beer bottle. Or at the sales aisle in a department store. Or in a church, as a bigshot volunteer. Yet extra happiness can be elusive, and they often come up empty-handed and frustrated.

They may even conclude that improving happiness is a myth.

Why, you'd think that all these frustrated happiness-seekers would give up searching. Especially the ones who think it's a myth. But they don't. They can't. And neither can you.

You can't give up on your search for more happiness. Ever. You're not allowed. People won't let you. They mandate you to be happy all the time. Want to know what I mean? Well, just go shopping. It seems that even if you spend an outrageous amount of money for low-quality goods, some asshole at the checkout stand is going to tell you to "Have a nice day!"

And if you're feeling blue and want to be left alone, you'd better paint a smile on your face. Otherwise everyone will be asking what's wrong and giving you advice for improving your spirits.

There's an old saying that goes, "Laugh and the world laughs with you. Cry and you cry alone."

Not true.

Actually, when you laugh everyone treats you like you're nuts, and they start avoiding you. Especially when you laugh incessantly while walking down a busy sidewalk, holding your ear, and staring at the ground. You're given a wide berth.

But if you want to attract a crowd, just start crying. Then a bunch of well-meaning folks will surround you and ask what's wrong. It could be anything. Maybe you just lost the lotto. Or perhaps you broke a shoelace. Tell them what's wrong and then they'll give you all kinds of helpful and unhelpful tips on how to "cure" your distraught state of mind. They might even slap you around a bit. No one can stand having an unhappy person in their midst. They've got to cure it and make you happy, even if it kills you.

Sometimes you have to really try hard to prove that you're happy. That's how you keep people off your case, so they don't pester you like a swarm of gadflies. Like, if you want to keep your wife from interrogating you over suspected dissatisfaction with the marriage, you'd better smile as you stuff that warmed-up tamale pie casserole down your throat and listen to her gab away about whatever it is she's talking about.

Or if you want to stay employed and move up the ladder, you'd better smile at your mean-spirited boss. No one wants to keep a disgruntled employee around. Especially mean-spirited bosses. They expect you to be happy all the time, no matter how lousy they treat you.

And it helps to learn the weather report every morning. That way you can spend the rest of the day updating bozos about the next cold front coming in. That gives you an opportunity to smile and appear happy and interested with life, so they'll stay off your case.

Yeah happiness can be a real drag.

That is if you go about it the wrong way and wind up having to fake it.

But you don't have to fake it. The only reason why you'd want to paint an artificial smile on your face is because you keep failing, time after time, to find genuine, extra happiness. It's because such happiness seems

to be nearly impossible, or maybe you've concluded that it's an outright myth.

But that's only because you've gone about your work in all the wrong ways. You've left town without a map. You've gotten a bum steer. You've bought a secret tip from a huckster in a raincoat. Or for some other reason you've headed the wrong way down a four-lane freeway.

But where there's a wrong way there's also a right way. And it's simple. I'll show you. I'm going to describe a worry-free way to turn around. U-turns are only stressful when there's a cop watching. But right now they're all on a donut break, so you can relax and spin that steering wheel. And even do a few donuts of your own, in the process.

If you know what you're doing, genuine, extra happiness is as simple to find as breathing fresh air on a mountaintop. And it's much more impressive. When you're genuinely more happy, no one will doubt that you've met society's mandate to always have a nice day. They might doubt your sanity sometimes, but they won't doubt your positive frame of mind. It will be obvious. And in fact it may be so obvious that some may actually become jealous. They'll say "Oh Shit!" when you say, "Bingo!" Then you'll be very happy, while they'll be very mad.

So relax. Open up your mind. Don't sweat. You'll feel relieved to know that the method for finding more and more happiness is such an easy-to-learn method. And so natural. It involves a process that is as natural as the movement of your bowels after a steady diet of prunes and refried beans.

And when you find it you'll be able to flush that unnatural fake smile of yours right down the toilet.

And think of what you will save:

Put away your credit card. You'll save money, because it won't cost you a cent. You'll save time, because the simple method to boosting your happiness can be followed as you go about the business of your everyday life. You won't have to do anything embarrassing, so you'll save face. And the effort you make will be a natural and productive effort. It will require some extra energy, but you'll save energy in the long run.

More importantly, the durable smile you'll paint on your face will be as genuine as the beaming visage of someone who just inherited their great-aunt's vast estate. So you'll save yourself from the mental effort of trying to prove to others that you're happy.

The key is in understanding how your mind produces happiness. Once you solve this mystery you'll know what you must do in order to increase its productivity levels. No one will be able to fool you anymore. You'll see how to loosen and release yourself from the fetters of unreliable methods

and suspicious sources. Expensive psychologists (who often shrink minds, rather than expand them), demanding religious institutions (where the virtue of generosity seems to be preached in every other sermon), mind-altering substances (where the Stone Age is romanticized), and other dead-ends to delight will lose their power over you.

Enjoyment can come from nowhere except your own mind. You've probably heard something like this before, usually from someone with a smarmy, know-it-all attitude. "Happiness comes from within," they might chime, like some wise guru expostulating on a mountaintop. This is a cliché that we're all familiar with. But it can be a maddening cliché when you don't understand *how* that happiness is produced from within.

No one likes re-runs. But when you don't know how happiness is produced, there's a temptation to try to repeat an enjoyable experience, to lift your sagging spirits. Maybe you do this—maybe you try to recreate the circumstances that were present at the time of the experience. But if you try this often enough, you'll learn how impossible it is to succeed.

So for instance, let's say you've had a rip-roarin' good time in a whorehouse. In order to repeat the feeling, you might try going back to that same bordello and finding the same prostitute to do business with. But the second time may not be the same as the first. Maybe the hoebag doesn't work there anymore. Or perhaps she's in a bad mood, or feeling real tired. Or maybe your own mood has turned. Or perhaps the ambiance of the facilities has changed.

It's impossible to exactly recreate the circumstances of any prior experience. But even when you come close, the amount of happiness produced may still be very different.

This is because happiness depends mainly upon the inner workings of your mind, and not upon external circumstances. What triggers happiness in you today may not trigger the same amount of happiness tomorrow. So if you try to recreate an experience, it's just like dropping a few quarters into a defective vending machine. Last time, you liked the Doritos. So you push the button for the Doritos again, but alas, they fail to fall to the bottom. So then you shake the machine, but alas, it tips over and squashes you.

No, don't depend on defective vending machines. There's another kind of machine that's much more reliable. It's the machinery of your own mind. And it has cogs, flywheels, pulleys, and belts that won't fail you. As long as you understand how they work. You'll learn in the next three chapters how these machinations of your mind produce happiness. And in the final three chapters, you'll learn about things you can do to better operate this machinery. It has something to do with hunting unicorns, but

that's all I'm saying about that for now. I want to avoid confusing everyone by getting too far ahead of myself.

After you read the next three chapters, you'll be like an engineer following a blueprint. You'll realize what must be done to up your mind's happiness production. And you'll discover that the task is surprisingly simple, even when not obvious. In fact, you may discover that all of your best efforts you're currently employing are actually just throwing a monkey wrench into the works. And so you'll be able to drop those efforts like a hot anvil, and stop toiling so hard.

And this is a very natural way to become happier, this cessation from fruitless toiling. Especially if you're as lazy as me.

Let's take a look at this mental machinery right now. Let me stick this otoscope in your ear. And let's have a gander at the inner workings of your mind . . .

ZOMBIE THEORY

Life is change, and life is automatically enjoyed. But not all change is automatically experienced. So the key to finding more enjoyment in life is to discover how to experience more change.

Wait, what did he say?

The first paragraph of this chapter encompasses, in a nutshell, how your mind produces happiness. You might want to read it a couple of times to kind of get a feel for it. I don't expect you to understand it completely at this point. It's complicated, you see. So I'm going to break it down in a way that makes it simple to understand. It's just going to require a few thousand more words than I used in the first paragraph.

So let's kill a tree and move on . . .

ZOMBIE THEORY

First of all, let's take on those preposterous sounding first three words: Life is change. Well life is a lot of things. Everyone seems to have their own definition. Some say that life is anything organic and biological (such as cow manure?). Some folks get real scientific and say that life must have the following things: homeostasis, organization, metabolism, growth, adaptation, stimuli response, and reproduction. Whew! You think *my* first paragraph was complicated?

The Buddha defined it by saying that life is suffering. Christ claimed to be the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6. Really, it's in there.).

And then there are some philosophers who are so stupid, they say that everything is alive. What a bunch of ignoramuses!

Actually, I follow the philosophers who say everything is alive. That's because I make a preposterous claim. I say that life is change. And that paints me into a corner, because everything is constantly changing.

Therefore I have to admit that if life is change, and if everything is constantly changing, then everything must be alive.

This logic is like a herd of elephants connected trunk-to-tail. One behemoth follows the other, and no one survives who gets in their way. Likewise no argument survives that says there can be lifelessness in an environment where life is defined as change.

Just glance around, and you'll see nothing but life. And that's because everything occupying your visual field is constantly changing (unless you need glasses). Whether it be a mountain or a titmouse, it never stays the same for longer than an instant. Mountains are constantly eroding or growing, and a titmouse, well, just what is a titmouse anyway?

No, it's not a rodent with a big nipple and long tail scampering around your cupboards stealing your cheese and crackers. Actually it's a bird—a little chickadee. And if it's not constantly changing by flitting about pecking at seeds and berries, then it's probably dead. And if it's dead, then it's decomposing. And that's change, too.

Yeah, so that means even the dead body of a bird is alive. Or any dead body for that matter. It's constantly decomposing, so it's constantly changing. Since it's constantly changing, it's constantly alive.

Which pushes me to an extreme when I discuss this philosophy. Before I teeter off the very edge of this limb I've gone out on, I'm going to have to give my philosophy some credence by christening it with a name. It's well known amongst the academic world of intellectuals that when you label a paradigm of thought with a name, it lends credence and commands respectability.

So I'm going to name my philosophy Zombie Theory. By giving it this name, it allows that even dead bodies must be alive, and it commands that all intellectuals pay respectful homage to such a notion.

And when you think about it, if even a dead body is alive, then maybe there's some truth to that movie, *Night of the Living Dead*. I watched it many years ago when I was a child. And it still keeps me awake at night. That's because some of the people I associate with leave me wondering if the movie is based on fact.

Zombie Theory, in short, states that life is change. Therefore even dead bodies are alive, because they are constantly changing through the process of decomposition.

LIFE IS AUTOMATICALLY ENJOYED

The next preposterous thing I say in the first paragraph of this chapter, is that life is automatically enjoyed. Now that gives me a little problem. If

dead bodies are alive, and if life is automatically enjoyed, then that means dead bodies are automatically enjoyed. So before my entire thesis here devolves into necrophilia, I need to straighten something out:

Do not have sex with zombies!

When I say that life is automatically enjoyed, I'm actually diving very deep, philosophically. I'm right down there with bottom-feeding intellectuals of all varieties. So we must be on careful alert at this juncture.

Look, I'm talking about life, here. LIFE. Life is something you cannot live without. Now, do you enjoy living? Before you answer no, please allow me to point a gun in your face. You may be feeling a little blue at this moment, and maybe wishing you were dead. But if I pointed a gun in your face I'll bet your heart might skip a few beats.

The survival instinct is undeniable. Many a distraught person has traveled to the Grand Canyon with the intent to dive off into oblivion. But as soon as they gaze into the abyss (and the abyss gazes back), they lose their guts, return to their cars, and drive home defeated. They probably find it easier to just shoot themselves (although I'll bet they wince just before pulling the trigger).

After all, it takes about thirty seconds to freefall one mile, and the gorges of the Grand Canyon can exceed a mile deep in spots. I'm sure they anticipate that as soon as they jump they're going to change their mind (once the old "wincing reflex" kicks in). And they realize that they'll spend the next thirty seconds knowing their entrails shall soon decorate the floor of a national park, with no hope of getting out of this fate. This will defeat their purpose. The purpose of suicide is to die because you want to die, not because you don't want to die. And jumping off a high cliff will probably put you in a state of mind that is not conducive to welcoming death.

If you were miserable all the time, with no hope for recovery, then suicide might hold some magnetism for you. But the more sanguine you are that you will snap out of it, the more you'll want to keep your body alive.

Now I'm jumping a bit ahead of myself (but at least I'm not jumping off the Grand Canyon) when I say this, but I'm going to say it anyway. When you are feeling wretched and miserable, it's because you are experiencing less life than normal. The key to enjoyment is to experience more life, not less.

You see, although life is automatically enjoyed, not all life is automatically experienced. This is because not all change is automatically experienced. But now I'm so far ahead of myself I'm starting to resemble

Stretch Armstrong. So let me back up a little. The rest of the class needs to catch up.

Let's see, where was I. Ah yes . . . Life is automatically enjoyed . . .

Yes, life *is* automatically enjoyed, but only the life that you experience. If there is any life going on around you that you are not experiencing, then you are not able to enjoy that life. If I whisper a dirty joke into your deaf ear, then you will not hear it, nor will you enjoy it. Only I will. See what I mean? You must experience life before you can enjoy it.

I hope the way I've explained this has been as obvious as a cinder block falling on your foot. If so, then you now know why you're feeling miserable. It's because you're not experiencing as much life as you otherwise could. Trust me, this is the reason.

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD AND BAD PEOPLE

But you don't trust me. And not because of my shifty eyes. It's because from you're current perspective, life really sucks.

Okay, so your husband's cheating on you. Bill collectors are pounding on your door. You have swollen corns on your feet. And when you try to win commiseration from others they just tell you, "that's life." Some will even say, "life's a bitch, and then you die." Aren't they good friends? Nice to receive such well-intentioned sympathy, isn't it?

But the Buddha himself said that life is suffering. So even he believed that life was a bitch. Actually there's a bit of controversy to that, and some scholars say the Buddha didn't quite mean it the way it came out in translation some 2,500 years later when his words were converted into English. In fact, I'll bet this translation is making him roll over in his stupa right now.

But needless to say, the Buddha certainly perceived some challenge to life that could lead to suffering. And he should know. With all the walking about he did, preaching his message, he probably had plenty of corns on his feet.

Are the bad things that happen to you, life? Of course they are. Because bad things are change, just like good things. And life is change (remember *Zombie Theory*). So why don't you automatically enjoy bad things?

Well actually you do. If your neighbor's house catches on fire, that's a bad thing. But that won't stop you from running out of your house so you can gaze upon the beautiful pyrotechnic display bursting into flames

before you. And all that excitement with the fire engines and stuff. And then there's the emotional drama, watching your poor neighbor crying and carrying on. Pyromaniacs just eat this stuff up, but so do regular folks, just like you and me. Well at least I do.

Come on, admit it! You do too.

Unless of course, it's your own house. When a bad thing happens to you, that's when you stop automatically enjoying a bad thing. It's just like amusement. We all love humor except when we're the butt of someone else's joke. Then we are not amused at all. But the reason is not because of the bad thing itself. It's because of what your mind does with it.

How your mind perceives the things you experience determines how much life you are able to experience. This is an important concept, so I'm going to repeat it. Besides I'm getting old so I'm allowed to repeat myself:

How your mind perceives the things you experience determines how much life you are able to experience.

A CUTE DOG STORY

I'll show you what I mean with this cute dog story:

Suppose you are strolling along, just as happy as can be, picking wildflowers in the sunshine and whistling a tune. Suddenly you spy a big Doberman Pincer running toward you. If you perceive that the dog may attack, your happiness will end abruptly. Now how can you be happy one second and scared shitless the next? The Doberman couldn't be the cause. For all you know it's a friendly dog that just wants someone to pet it and throw a ball.

The cause for your abrupt change in mood is your mind, not the dog. First your mind is perceiving a leisurely stroll, beautiful wildflowers, warm sunshine, and a snappy tune. But suddenly your mind's attention is captured by the perception of imminent attack. That perception turns your mind's focus from the many things you were enjoying and concentrates it upon one thing: preparation for an incoming attack. It's red alert time!

Your mind becomes like a laser beam. It's focus becomes so strongly concentrated upon dealing with the imminent destruction to your physical body, that it no longer can perceive anything else. This is why we call this blind fear. Blind fear happens when your mind cannot perceive anything else except the threat you are facing.

The amount of life your mind is able to experience declines like a decelerating bullet striking a New York City phone book. No longer can it experience the life coming from the exercise of your legs while strolling, or from the wildflowers, or from the sunshine, or from the tune. Now it

can only experience the life coming from the approaching, possibly vicious, dog.

Thank evolution for this. The narrow beam of focus is caused by a survival mechanism nascent to the workings of your brain. It happens automatically, and helps you to concentrate all of your energy into dealing effectively with an imminent danger. But at the same time, it robs you of your happiness by depriving you of the ability to experience normal amounts of life.

Thus the wildflowers, warm sunshine, snappy tune, etc, are elements of life and change that are not automatically experienced. Aha! You see?! This is why I state in the opening paragraph of this chapter, “not all change is automatically experienced.” Sometimes shit happens. And when it does, it diverts your attention away from other changes occurring in your environment, and directs it squarely upon the shit. And this prevents you from experiencing those other changes. And this bars you from automatically enjoying them. Follow the logic? Isn’t that clever?

This is why I also stated in the opening paragraph, “the key to finding more enjoyment in life is to discover how to experience more change.” Yup, I don’t miss a lick.

Now one way to experience more change is to make wiser decisions. For instance, had you been more wise and chosen to take your stroll in a public park rather than in a private compound guarded by specially trained Doberman Pincer attack dogs, you would have experienced more change, life and enjoyment during your little nature walk. All the little natural processes that form happiness from within would have fallen into place, as swiftly and surely as cotton candy melts in your mouth.

So if you get attacked by a dog in the near future, don’t say I didn’t warn you.

AUTO-ENJOYMENT THEORY

How many times have you said to yourself something like, “I could be so much happier if it only wasn’t for _____” (fill in the blank). You perceive that something is getting in the way of your being happy. But ultimately that is not what is keeping you from being happy. Ultimately, way down deep inside at the pulsating core of the heart of happiness production, the obstruction to your sense of well-being is your inability to experience a normal amount of change.

So your husband cheats on you, bill collectors harass you, you have swollen corns on your tootsies, your house is on fire, and people are making fun of you. These things by themselves don’t keep you from bliss.

But they do trigger reactions within your mind that force it into a narrow focus, preventing you from experiencing a normal amount of change and life. And this is what ultimately obstructs happiness.

I call my philosophy about life being automatically enjoyed, Auto-Enjoyment Theory. Please don't confuse it with America's love affair with Detroit. When you pair Zombie Theory (life is change) with Auto-Enjoyment Theory, you can envision the undead driving shiny new cars. Or you can understand how your mind produces happiness. You can understand that whenever your mind experiences change (life), you automatically enjoy that change.

But when that change forces you to focus on *it* to the exclusion of other changes, you experience less life and less enjoyment than normal.

But wait. Is that all the time, or just some of the time? Is it possible to focus on a change, to the exclusion of other changes, and still enjoy yourself?

You may be asking this question because you know there are some things you really enjoy focusing upon. Such as eating a serving of strawberry shortcake, with your mind completely immersed in the exquisite sweetness of the dish. How is it possible that you can enjoy such a change, where your mind is so deeply involved in focus that you aren't paying attention to any other changes going on around you?

Well, to answer your question, I'm going to cop out by saying that is a subject for another book. Yeah, I'm a real intellectual coward. I get scared when people ask me questions that legitimately challenge my theories, and so I run away as fast as I can. Besides, this may be an opportunity for me to sell another book.

But on the other hand, if your challenge goes unanswered you might assume that Zombie Theory and Auto-Enjoyment Theory are incorrect. And I consider these theories to be cornerstones of happiness.

Hmm.

Alright, alright, you've backed me up against a wall. I'll discuss your question with you. But you're really making my job difficult. The answer gets kind of complicated, so I'll have to discuss it in a separate chapter. And I'll need to use a lot of words to simplify the explanation. So just consider the chapter to be a free book within a book.

The next chapter helps provides the answer to your question, by focusing upon focus. And it also makes you aware of awareness.

But for now, we've already covered a lot of ground. And you may be getting a little foggy-eyed. Let's take a break, then take a little white pill, and then with minds as fresh as bakery donuts in the morning, we'll focus our awareness on the next chapter.

DOMINATRIX THEORY

MOTION PICTURE THEORY

Before we get into a discussion about focus, we have to learn about awareness. So let's go to the movies. Let's discuss something that I call Motion Picture Theory. Bear with me. It's a good movie. It won several Academy Awards.

Motion Picture Theory addresses how awareness works in your mind. In other words, it explains how you are aware of things.

Awareness is a fickle animal. It's constantly moving about from one thing to another, like a packrat in a can of marbles. Ever take your wife shopping for a new appliance, only to find her unable to decide which color she wants? That's kind of like awareness. Always moving back and forth, around and around, and never ever stopping and staying on just one thing.

But awareness probably has a better excuse than your wife has, for being fickle. You see, the problem it faces is the same problem detectives have when you come up with a good alibi. You can't be in more than one place at a time. The same is true for awareness. It is impossible—in fact it defies all known reality outside the dimension of science fiction—for your awareness to be in two places at once. This talent is reserved only for wives shopping for appliances.

Don't believe me? I know, I say a lot of things in this book that challenge convention. But has convention ever made you happy? It has?! I said "convention," not "conventions." I've attended a few myself.

I suppose you won't be satisfied without proof.

Okay, well then, you can see what I mean by donning your white laboratory coat and conducting a little scientific experiment. Got your coat on? All right, now just sit there on your laboratory stool and close your eyes. Now try as hard as you can to think two different thoughts at the exact same time. That's two *different* thoughts. For instance, one thought can be a memory of you pulling your little red wagon when you were five years old. And the other thought can be a calculation of the circumference of a frightened blowfish. It doesn't matter what the thoughts are, as long as they are significantly unrelated.

Unless you have superhuman powers beyond even that of The Flash, you'll notice how impossible this is to do. What you will also notice is that your mind will shift its focus back and forth, from one thought to the other, at rapid speed, in its attempt to process both thoughts at the same time. Either that or you'll notice your mind going blank from an overload and smoke pouring out of your ears.

Thinking two thoughts at the exact same time simply cannot be done. And that's because no matter how hard you try, you cannot force your awareness to be in more than one place at a time.

And yet this seems counterintuitive. Wherever you are at this moment, you are probably aware of many things in your environment. You're aware of what your eyes are seeing, your ears are hearing, your nose is smelling, your tongue is tasting, your body is feeling, and your brain is thinking. And it all seems to be going on at once. But it isn't. It's all an illusion.

Sucker!!! You've been punked big time!

The awareness within your mind is the greatest magician of all time. Even Harry Houdini would have to bow to this magician. Awareness plays a game of illusion. It gives you the illusion that you're aware of many things at once, when actually you are only aware of one thing at a time.

So how does awareness do this? At the risk of breaking the Magician's Code, and being sawed in half by an irate prestidigitateur, I am going to reveal how it pulls off this stunning trick. But watch closely, because the hand can be quicker than the eye!

The secret can be expressed in one word: Speed. Your awareness moves at lightning-fast speed. It's like that phantom lover you imagine your spouse has. He or she always manages to jump out the bedroom window the exact moment you open the front door of your house.

Awareness moves so quickly from one sensory input to another, that it provides you with the illusion of being aware of many things at once. It's that simple. And this is why I call it Motion Picture Theory.

Motion pictures operate under the same principle as awareness. A motion picture is actually a series of still pictures that are flashed before

your eyes at a rapid pace (24 frames per second at your local theater). These still pictures provide the illusion of motion as they pass before the lighted lens of the projector.

Your awareness does something similar. It captures still moments of input coming from your senses and “flashes” them before your consciousness. But it does this so rapidly it seems as if you are aware of many things at once. And it seems as if these things are constantly changing, even though each moment of input is a still moment. Thus you experience the illusion of a continuous flow of the present moment, within an environment consisting of multiple stimuli that seem to be affecting you all at once.

Whew! That’s very technical. So if you’re still a little confused, let me break it down for you using the same teaching method employed by Monday Night Football. Let’s use slow-motion, and watch how awareness would work if it wasn’t operating at its usual lightning-fast speed.

Let’s say that your awareness starts with visual input. And so you are able to see a still image. But while you are viewing the still image, you cannot hear, smell, taste, feel or think anything. Then, in slow-motion speed, your awareness shifts to sound input. While it’s there you hear a constant tone. But now you cannot see anything. Nor can you smell, taste, feel or think anything. Then your awareness shifts to your olfactory nerve. So now you can smell, but you are still blind, and also deaf. Nor can you taste, feel, or think anything. And so on and so forth as your awareness shifts from one sensory input to another. Note that while it is aware of any one particular sensory input, it cannot be aware of any other sensory input, or of any changes to a sensory input.

Now aren’t you glad your awareness moves at lightning-fast speed? Think of how impatient you’d get if life somehow got stuck in perpetual slow-mo. Just the same, the price you pay for such speed is that you fall under the illusion that you can be aware of many sensory inputs at once.

Awareness puts all of these little sensory inputs together at I- don’t-know-how-many billions of frames per second, that it does something to the equivalent of playing a real fancy, hi-tech motion picture for you. This motion picture is better than any 3-D flick or smellelevision show you can watch or sniff. It’s ultra-high tech, with special effects at the highest ethereal levels the human mind is capable of attaining. What did I just say? Really I’m not sure. I’m just trying to get across to you that awareness is one amazing miraculous feature of your mind, that deserves a big thumbs-up from any movie critic.

But movies are not just about awareness. They're also about focus. Focus also has a priority in a movie theater. After all, you can't watch a movie if the lens on the projector is not properly focused.

Focus is real important stuff. Think about it. Just where would we be without it?

DOMINATRIX THEORY

Focus allows you to do your schoolwork while ogling the pretty girl sitting next to you. Focus allows you to drive your car with your knees while talking on your cell phone, reading a newspaper, and combing your mustache in the rear view mirror. Focus allows you to sit cross-legged in the dark, on the floor of your walk-in closet, while contemplating your navel and chanting, "Om Mani Padme Hum."

Without focus you could not function. Your awareness would just be scanning everything in your environment over and over again, without paying special attention to any aspect of it. You would be in a trance-like state, aware of the All, but without any ability to do anything with the All. Now I know there are some people with religious motivations who would just love to enter that sort of state of mind. They might call it "completely letting go," or "transcendence," or "Nirvana," or some such thing. And I must admit, this state of mind can be enjoyable (for reasons which will be made apparent later).

But it is not a practical state of mind. You must have and use your ability to focus in order accomplish anything (such as survival tasks, which keep your body alive). And you must have focus in order to satisfy your innate urge to explore and create. And where would you be in a strip-poker game, without focus? You could not win, but even if you did you could not enjoy your victory.

Focus adds a dimension to living that brings spikes of delightful happiness, along with episodes of terrible pain and misery. You might compare it to a dominatrix. Visit the dungeon of a dominatrix and you'll see what I mean. She can make you tingle with joy. But she'll also whip your ass something fierce from time to time. Especially when you're not careful and you break her little rules.

For this reason, I call my general theory about focus, Dominatrix Theory. What a dominatrix can do is pretty close to what focus does. Dominatrix Theory states the following: Focus is a phenomenon of your mind that causes you to feel either pleasure or pain.

There are powerful concepts contained within Dominatrix Theory. More powerful than the strongest, longest leather bullwhip. When you

submit your mind to this imposing theory, you will understand focus like you've never understood before. Yeow! So dress up in your best latex, and let's take a closer look at focus.

Awareness, for all its flitting about, plays a major role in how you focus your attention. But just how does this fickle animal do this?

Awareness doesn't just indiscriminately scan your senses for incoming stimuli. No, awareness discriminates. But it's a good sort of discrimination, and has nothing to do with Jim Crow, male chauvinism, ageism, or any of that politically incorrect stuff.

Awareness dances a kind of dance, and plays favorites in its choice of dancing partners. It shifts from one stimulus to another, scanning everything going on around you. But when it finds a stimulus that it likes, it will shift to that stimulus more often than to others. This is just like what you do at a dance. You may like the idea of dancing with all the girls who show up. But you prefer to dance most often with the prettiest girls. And when you find the prettiest girl, you make a note to exchange partners for her more often than for any other.

Let's leave the dance floor and look at this scientifically. When awareness finds a stimulus it likes, it returns to that stimulus more often than to other stimuli. Awareness cannot dwell on one stimulus for longer than an instant. But it can shift away to a different stimulus, and then immediately shift back to the one it was previously on. It's kind of like how criminals behave. They're always on the run from the law, so they can't stay in any one place for very long. But they do return to the scene of the crime, from time to time.

THE ABC'S OF FOCUS

If you're still confused, let me spell out the ABC's of focus. Now this is gonna get real, real boring, so if you've already figured out what I'm talking about, you can go to work on your coloring book. I'll be right back in a moment.

Suppose there are 10 different stimuli in your environment (actually there are millions, if not billions, but I'm trying to make things simple here, so that even a caveman or gecko can understand it). Let's label each stimulus A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. Go ahead and count 'em. There's ten labels there. Now let's say your awareness is scanning these stimuli one by one, going from A to B to C on down the line through J, and then starting all over again at A, over and over again. In this case your awareness is not focusing at all. It is just scanning everything going on around you, one by one, over and over.

But let's say awareness takes a liking to the stimulus labeled "E." Hey, E is a well-proportioned strong and sexy letter, so why wouldn't awareness take a liking to it? So now awareness wants to spend all of its time with E, and to hell with all the other letters.

Ah-ah, no can do.

Awareness is not allowed to spend any longer than an instant with E, and then it must move on, shifting to other stimuli. This is because it is impossible for awareness to spend any longer than an instant dwelling on any one stimulus.

But you know how love affairs are. No matter how hard you try to keep two lovers apart, they always find a way to get together. And the same is true with awareness and E.

Awareness finds a way around the restrictions on its love life by shifting away from E to F, and then shifting right back to E again. And then that sly romantic awareness shifts away from E to G, and then back to E again. And it keeps doing this sneaky back and forth romance game with E, creating a shifting pattern something like this: E-F-E-G-E-H-E-I-E-J-E-A-E-B-E-C-E-D-E-F-E-G-E-H . . . and so forth.

And so you see that awareness continues to scan all the stimuli in its environment. But it spends a disproportionate half of its time shifting to the one stimulus E, while dividing the other half of its time shifting to the remaining nine stimuli.

This is how awareness focuses on E. And when this focus happens, awareness becomes divided into two types: foreground awareness and background awareness. This is like typical class warfare. Foreground awareness involves all the stimuli that awareness shifts to most often. The rich, privileged class of stimuli, so to speak. And background awareness involves all the stimuli that awareness shifts to least often. These are the poor have-nots. The huddled masses, if you will.

Maybe your brain has gone numb at this moment, and you're just sitting there twiddling your thumbs with this book laying open in front of your glazed-over eyes. Okay, then. I can relate, dude. So let me explain this from where you're at right now.

As you sit at your desk twiddling your thumbs, your thumbs and the act of twiddling are part of your foreground awareness. Everything else going on around you, such as the words in this book, is all kind of a blur. You're sort of aware of it, but not too much. That's all part of your background awareness. And this is because your awareness is shifting more often to your thumbs than to anything else in your environment.

Now pay attention to the words of this book. Put them back into your foreground awareness. I guarantee you will learn something of value from

reading my words. I know that love affairs with letters of the alphabet can get a little weird and boring, but meatier things are yet to come.

PRACTICAL JOKE THEORY

I estimate that less than 1% of everything in your environment is in your foreground awareness, while more than 99% exists in the background. And yet your mind spends much more than 1% of its time with your awareness shifted to your foreground awareness. In fact there are times when you can become so engrossed with your focus on something, that more than 99% of the time your awareness is shifting to the narrow array of things in the foreground, and less than 1% of the time is it shifting to the vast array of things in the background. Wow, talk about your class warfare. It's like the tiny minority of rich just keeps getting richer, while the vast majority of poor just keeps getting poorer.

Do these numbers crunch? Like salty pretzels fresh from the supermarket, my friend. I'll show you:

Now keep in mind that when I speak of "environment," I mean anything and everything your mind can be aware of at this moment. That includes mental activity, such as thoughts and emotions. And it includes physical feelings, and stuff going on within you and around you that you can see and hear, and whatever else you can be aware of.

With all the billions of things in your environment that you can be aware of at any given time, there are many things available that can be part of the 1%. After all, 1% of one billion is ten million. So your awareness can be shifting around amongst ten million things in your foreground, 99% of the time, and only foray into the 990 million things in your background about 1% of the time (assuming that there are exactly one billion things in your environment).

When this occurs a perfect scenario is established for a practical joke. If you are so engrossed with focusing on one narrow aspect of your environment, you're paying very little attention to anything else. This makes it real easy for someone to sneak up from behind and scare the living bejesus out of you. And real easy for you to respond with a quick spinning karate kick to the nuts.

That's why I don't pull this trick on people. But I do pull it on cats. When I see a cat totally engrossed on, let's say, a mouse under a couch, I'll sneak up and grab it from behind. Some cats have been known to leap about ten feet into the air after I've done this. I know it's lame and sophomoric, and I always feel sorry for the feline later. But geez, it's just so funny to see them jump so high. I can't help myself.

For this reason I call this theory, Practical Joke Theory. Practical Joke Theory states: The more focused your awareness is, the less background awareness you have. And therefore the easier it is for some lout you're barely aware of in your background, to pull a practical joke on you.

REAL ESTATE THEORY

I have some good news and bad news about awareness. The good news is that you will never lose the amount of awareness you currently have. The bad news is, you cannot create any more awareness than what you currently have. Awareness is a limited resource. It's kind of like real estate. There's only so much of it and no more, because no one's making any more. But unlike an underwater mortgage that you're allowing to go delinquent as you await an eviction notice, you will never lose any of the awareness you have now. You can't buy or sell it on Ebay. You can't give or receive it as a Christmas present. You can't steal it from some drunk laying in the gutter. And he can't steal it from you. Nor can you decide you have too much awareness and amputate some of it from your psyche. What you have you're stuck with. And what you don't have, you're not going to get.

This is why Practical Joke Theory works the way it works. Awareness is in limited supply. If you focus 99% of your awareness on one narrow part of the environment, that leaves you with only 1% of awareness for everything else. You can't manufacture additional amounts to fill in the void.

It's like water in a tub. If a fat person sits in the tub, the water level may go up about a foot. But if a skinny person sits in the tub, the water level may only rise a few inches. But the amount of water in the tub doesn't change, only the level. (Alright, alright, unless the person is so fat that the water overflows onto the bathroom floor. But let's don't get carried away here.) In the same way, the more you focus your awareness, the higher its level will be in the foreground while the lower it will be in the background. But the total amount of awareness within your consciousness will always remain the same.

You can consciously will your awareness to focus on some things, while virtually ignoring other things. For instance you can sit in your easy chair and watch the evening news while your wife sits next to you and gabs on with all the little meaningless chatter about what's been going on in her life. Now, you can choose to focus on what she's saying, while ignoring the TV news, or you can do what most thick-headed male schlubs do, and ignore her palaver while focusing on the boob tube.

Oh you'll still be aware of what she's saying, but it will be kind of like a buzzing gadfly in the background. And you'll be responding by saying things like, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." So when she asks for permission to spend \$10,000 on a pair of diamond earrings, you will likely respond, "Uh-huh." This will result in the checking account being overdrawn, but at least you won't miss that great story about some jerk in Wisconsin winning a cheese-eating contest.

It's all about focus. Focus determines what real estate your mind is going to dwell in. But it doesn't change the total amount of real estate your mind owns.

Like, if you own a 160-acre farm, and you're currently plowing the South Forty, you won't notice that the cows have just gotten into the corn you've planted on the North Forty. But you still own the North Forty. You're just not there tending to it at the moment.

I like the analogy with real estate so much, I'm going to name this Real Estate Theory. Real Estate Theory states that you have a limited amount of awareness, which you cannot increase or decrease. Focus can shift your awareness around, but it doesn't change the amount of awareness you have. And the more awareness you place in the foreground, through focus, the less awareness will be available in the background.

So now you know how awareness and focus work. But I still haven't answered the question that ended the last chapter. No, I'm not trying to evade the question. I'm just trying to establish some groundwork that I can use, in order to answer it as clearly as possible.

Let's refresh our memory. The question is: Is it possible to focus on a change, to the exclusion of other changes, and still enjoy yourself?

The answer is yes, as long as you're not focusing on a vicious Doberman Pincer that is about to attack you.

The key that determines whether or not you're going to enjoy what you're focusing on, lies in a concept known as Uniqueness. Uniqueness is the Holy Grail of Happiness. Because it determines whether you're going to respond to something by saying, "Holy Cow!" or "Holy Shit!"

In fact, Uniqueness is such an important actor on the stage of happiness, that it must be covered in a separate chapter. So now, check out the spotlight, center-stage. It shines upon Uniqueness.

Take a bow, Uniqueness. You have become the main star.

UNIQUENESS (IT'S ONE-OF-A-KIND)

Uniqueness is what you did with your boyfriend for the first time, when your parents were out for the evening. Or it's the Loch Ness Monster, captured and held for public display in a giant aquarium. Or it's test driving a Lamborghini, when all you've ever owned is a 20-year-old Buick.

Get what I mean? Uniqueness is the sweet spot, baby! It's the fulfillment of fantasy. It's the strange and unexpected. It's an escape from the mundane. In fact it's an infinite amount of things, because it's anything unpredictable or unusual.

Would you rather read a news story about a dog that goes around biting men, or about a man that goes around biting dogs?

Uniqueness is what your mind lives for, salivates for, and dreams of every minute of every waking and sleeping hour of every day. The greatest delights in life are found when you experience the most unique situations. And it is for these experiences that you will walk to the ends of the earth to encounter.

When it comes to uniqueness, it's one-of-a-kind. Now that's a safe thing to say. But I've said so many unconventional, unsafe things in previous chapters, I want to take a break on the safe side for once. Because, well, I guess I'm longing for a unique experience.

So how do you find this one-of-a-kind thing? Where does this coveted elixir of happiness come from?

FIRST, WHAT THE HECK IS IT?

Well first, let's figure out what uniqueness is exactly. In theory, I mean. Remember Zombie Theory? Zombie Theory states that life is change, and asserts that even dead bodies are alive, because the process of decomposition amounts to change. Uniqueness fits right into Zombie Theory. After all, it would be very unique to see a zombie rise from the grave and start walking around.

Uniqueness is simply a way of gauging the amount of change that occurs, from the perspective of the person experiencing the change. Some changes are perceived as more unique than others. For instance, the second hand on a watch is always changing, as it travels round and round the dial. But the changes are not very unique, since you are well acquainted with the actions of a watch. But if the second hand of your watch began running backwards—now that would be very unique. From your perspective, that would bring much more change than when the second hand runs in the normal direction.

So uniqueness gauges the amount of change that occurs, from the perspective of the person experiencing the change. And since change is life, uniqueness also gauges the amount of life that is experienced. Some experiences in life are more unique than others.

Try this little experiment. Sit on the front lawn of your house and watch the grass grow. If you try this, here's what I guess will happen:

The grass all around you will be constantly changing as it slowly grows taller and taller. But the change will be so slow you will have great difficulty detecting it. Therefore the change and life you will experience from this lawn-watching activity will not be very unique. And you will feel bored. What a yawner of a time. You might consider reading a dictionary while you're at it, just to infuse a little more excitement into your life.

On the other hand, if you're visiting from the Gobi Desert and have never seen lawn before, watching grass grow might prove very interesting to you. You'll have a great time sitting on someone's front lawn while observing the greenery. This is because from your perspective (and not the perspective of the lawn owner), watching grass grow would be a very unique experience.

But if you're the owner of the lawn, here's a way that you too can find lawn-watching an exciting activity:

Pour gasoline over the grass and set it on fire. That will cause a lot of change to occur over a very short period of time. And the amount of change will be much more unique than what you get from just watching the grass grow.

Okay, I'm just kidding. Please don't set your lawn on fire. That is a dangerous way to experience large amounts of change. There are much safer ways to go about finding uniqueness. Besides, I keep using fire analogies. That's not very unique of me, and I want to be more interesting. So I think maybe next time I'll try a drowning analogy.

Uniqueness is relative. And you may have some unique relatives, so you may know what I mean when I say uniqueness is relative. Every change is unique to some degree. But some changes are more unique when compared with other changes. So the real question about uniqueness is, to what degree is a change relatively unique?

Every breath you take is unique, if just for the fact that each breath occurs at a different time. But paying attention to your breath can get boring real quick. This is because although it is unique, it is not very unique. You're very familiar with your breathing, and one breath is usually not much different from another. Since your breath is not very unique, there is not much change going on in the perception of your breath. And since there is not much change going on, there is also not much life going on. Therefore there is not much life to be found in your breath. I could drone on and on, but I'm interrupted by your disagreement. Huh, you were paying more attention than I thought.

"Now wait a second!" you exclaim, "Life and breath go hand in hand, don't they? You cannot live without breathing. And haven't we all heard about 'the breath of life?' So what's this nonsense about saying there is not much life to be found in your breath?"

Well there really isn't. Breathing will keep your body alive, but it will deaden your mind real fast if you pay much attention to it. And this is because breathing is an ordinary everyday thing, and therefore not very unique. Think about it like this: You do not have a night out on the town so you can breathe. But you do breathe while you're having a night out on the town.

Remember Auto-Enjoyment Theory? It states that life is automatically enjoyed. This means that the more change (and life) you experience, the more enjoyment you will automatically feel. Since uniqueness gauges the amount of change and life you experience, then the more unique you find a change to be, the more you will automatically enjoy it. That is why you go out and have a night on the town, rather than sit at home watching yourself breathe. You're looking for some uniqueness, because uniqueness is something you don't have to try hard to enjoy. Instead, you automatically enjoy it.

And that is why uniqueness is the sweet spot. It's automatically enjoyed.

CHINESE FOOD THEORY

No there's not much uniqueness to be found in breathing. But there's a lot of uniqueness in such things as sex, delicious food, and fast cars. When you have these things, you're really living! That's why we humans tend to gravitate toward these types of things, and why we tend to just take breathing for granted and not pay attention to it most of the time (except when we're being suffocated by a pillow, or something).

Uniqueness is found in every sensation detected by the nervous system of your body that is transmitted to your brain. When you consider the many billions of nerve endings found throughout your physique, you'll have to admit something: You've got a lot of nerve! And every moment of every day, you have billions of sensations being transmitted from those nerve endings on up to your brain. It's like telephone-central up there between your ears, with phones constantly ringing off the hook all over the place.

Each nerve ending sends a message. The message is not much at all. Usually it's just a tiny little impulse. Not even enough to pass for a Western Union telegram. But all of those billions of little impulses form patterns that your mind perceives. Patterns such as visual images, the sound of music (no, not necessarily the movie with Julie Andrews), intellectual concepts, and so forth. And some of those patterns can be very unique. The more unique a pattern is, the more change and life you will experience. And therefore the more you will enjoy it.

But you also gain enjoyment apart from the patterns. Each little nerve impulse is a tiny little message of uniqueness. It's not much uniqueness, but it is a little. Just like breathing, it's a very ordinary form of change, and therefore it is not very unique at all, in and of itself. But consider this: There are billions and billions of these tiny little not-very-unique messages being transmitted to your brain every moment. So what they lack in quality of uniqueness, they can make up for in quantity.

Suppose you worked for the IRS in China. Now I'm not saying there really is an IRS in China, but with over one billion citizens, I'm sure the IRS would just love to set up shop there. Yes, it's an IRS agent's dream: tax the poor Chinese. Now let's say your job at the Chinese IRS is to handle all the tax deposits coming in from the citizens. And let's say you figured out a way to embezzle one penny from every tax return filed by a Chinese citizen. With a billion taxpayers in that country, you could get quite rich from this copped copper misappropriation scheme. Yeah, it's only a penny, but one billion pennies amounts to ten million dollars. That's

quite a windfall. And who's going to notice one measly penny missing from a transaction? It's ingenious. I think I'm going to travel to China to see if I can get a job as a tax collector.

Just like the one-penny-per-transaction scheme, your mind is receiving one small impulse per nerve ending from the billions of nerve endings in your body. Individually, each impulse amounts to a very small amount of uniqueness. But taken together, the cumulative effect is a very large amount of uniqueness.

Therefore the natural effect that comes from just living your life passively, without anything special going on, is for you to experience a large amount of uniqueness coming from all the nerve endings in your body. And since a large amount of uniqueness means a large amount of change, and since change is life, and since life is automatically enjoyed, you experience a large amount of enjoyment from doing nothing in particular.

I call this Chinese Food Theory. I call it this because, just as there are a lot of Chinese people, there are also a lot of nerve impulses constantly arising from the nerve endings in your body. These nerve impulses do not have to form discernible patterns for you to enjoy them. Just like Chinese food. Even when you can't figure out what it is, you can still enjoy it.

Chinese Food Theory states the following: An individual sensation arising in your body has a low level of uniqueness. But there are so many sensations arising at any given time, that in quantity they have a high level of uniqueness. This makes the sensations enjoyable, even when they form no discernible unique patterns.

This is why you can sit in meditation like some Buddha, and chant "Om Mani Padme Hum," and experience the bliss of Nirvana. When your mind reaches the point of letting go of all mental thoughts and desires, it stops focusing on patterns that form from all the incoming nerve impulses. When your mind stops perceiving patterns, it is left with just the nerve impulses and the bulk uniqueness and enjoyment derived from them. It is a pleasant, blissful feeling.

FAT TORTURE THEORY

Chinese Food Theory is a stepping-stone that leads into my next theory, which I call Fat Torture Theory. I've tried to be like Confucius, and said something like "One who does nothing enters the bliss of being One with nothing." Well, that's not exactly what I've said, but something like it.

But that is not always true. We know from experience that even in our laziest moments we can feel pain. Enter Fat Torture Theory.

Suppose you are just sitting around doing nothing, enjoying the automatic bliss from natural uniqueness, when along comes some clumsy oaf who walks past you and steps on your toe. Odds are it will be a fat person. With so many obese people in this world, a fat person is more likely than any other body type to step on your toe. And sooner or later it's bound to happen. This is why I call it Fat Torture Theory.

Fat Torture Theory states that pain is inevitable, just as assuredly as a fat person will one day step on your toe.

Now as soon as your toe is stepped on, your bliss disappears and is replaced with painful agony. How can this happen? After all, your billions of nerve endings are still sending billions of little unique messages to your brain every moment. So why won't you continue to experience a large amount of natural uniqueness and enjoyment?

The reason has to do with the sensations now coming from your toe. These are very powerful sensations. Whenever your toe is stepped on, or any other traumatic insult occurs to any part of your body, the nerve endings there will stop sending little meek mild impulses to your brain. Instead they will send strong, powerful signals, that have the effect of instantly capturing your mind's attention. When they capture your mind's attention, they capture your awareness and force it to focus on them.

It's like when your wife hollers in your face, "Hey asshole! You forgot to empty the trash!" You can't ignore a message like that. It instantly captures your attention and forces you to focus on it. In fact, lots of things will do this. Hitting your thumb with a hammer, poking your eye with a screwdriver, stepping barefoot on your daughter's jacks game, crapping a jalapeno pepper, and so forth. Any of these things will send strong nerve impulses to your brain that instantly capture and focus the attention of your awareness.

Remember from the last chapter where we discussed how focus can spend 99% of its time dwelling on just 1% of the stimuli in your environment, and only 1% of its time dwelling on the 99% of remaining stimuli in your environment? This is what happens when you experience pain.

When nerve impulses from one area of your body send powerful signals that capture your focus, 99% of your awareness will then focus on the stimuli arising from that area.

This is often painful because it diverts most of your awareness away from all the billions of other sensations coming from your body, and forces it to spend most of its time on just a small range of stimuli coming

from one spot on your body. Such as your toe. This small range of stimuli produces a very small quantity of uniqueness. Because the amount of nerve endings involved is so small, the low quality of uniqueness coming from each nerve ending cannot be made up for by quantity.

This drastically reduces the amount of uniqueness you are able to experience. Because a low amount of uniqueness means a low amount of change, and because change is life, and because life is automatically enjoyed, your enjoyment level will instantly decline at a precipitous rate when someone steps on your toe. Especially when it's a big fat person.

This sudden precipitous decline in enjoyment is experienced in your mind as pain. Your mind automatically seeks change, life and uniqueness. It wants no part of pain. It wants no part of sudden declines in uniqueness and enjoyment. Your mind is a fun-lover. It's a life-lover. And pain forces your mind to experience less life than it knows is possible to experience.

PAIN AND YOUR RELATIVES

Really, pain is just a relative experience. When your mind knows that it can experience more life than it is currently experiencing, then it will be dissatisfied. For instance, would you want to lie on a bed of pebbles if an empty hammock connected to two shade trees was swinging in the breeze right next to you? If you're like normal folks, your mind would gravitate toward the hammock, because it promises more life than the pebbles. Therefore, it would be dissatisfied with lying on rocky ground.

A small amount of dissatisfaction is felt as discomfort. But a large amount of dissatisfaction is felt as pain.

When you think about the relative nature of pain, you can understand why pain throbs. Pain cannot be felt constantly. Pay attention the next time something bad happens to you. Or if you're impatient to learn quickly, go ahead and cause yourself some pain right now. Be like one of the Three Stooges. Maybe hit yourself on the ear with a rubber hammer. Not too hard. Just hard enough to regret following this suggestion.

Now watch the pain. See how it throbs. It always throbs. It throbs by weakening and strengthening over and over again. For a moment you will feel no pain. Then you will feel great pain. Then you will feel no pain again. Then the great pain returns. On and on.

It throbs because your mind needs continual reminders of how much enjoyment is available, in order to comprehend how little enjoyment it is getting from the pain-causing stimulus. When it comprehends how little enjoyment it is getting, its level of dissatisfaction will rise to the point of feeling pain. In other words, the amount of pain you feel is relative to the

amount of enjoyment you know you can feel. And you need to throb to those levels of enjoyment in order to remember them.

You are never dissatisfied in a vacuum. You are only dissatisfied when you know there is something better out there that you can have, if only your situation were different.

Let's get all technical for a moment. When pain throbs, the mechanical dynamic goes something like this:

First most of your awareness focuses on a small range of stimuli, due to strong signals coming from the nerve endings that have been affected by the stimuli. Since there is very little uniqueness coming from such a small range, your level of enjoyment declines precipitously. Then your awareness is released from the focus. For a moment it shifts freely and evenly amongst all the stimuli in your environment. This causes a momentary feeling of enjoyment, due to an increased perception of uniqueness. Then the strong signals capture your awareness again, and send it back to the narrow range of stimuli, causing enjoyment to decline again. And over and over the pattern repeats itself until the stimulus triggering the pain goes away, or maybe until your mommy kisses your boo-boo.

VIRGIN INVESTMENT THEORY

That's how physical pain works. But physical pleasure is a bit different sort of animal. It's kind of like a cuddly bear, without the teeth and claws.

Pain and pleasure have one thing in common. They both are caused by stimuli that attract the focus of your awareness. But why would one set of stimuli cause pain, while the other causes pleasure? This question gets at the question I've been tackling since the end of the second chapter. So let me horse-collar it and drag it to the ground once and for all.

The question, as you will recall, is: Is it possible to focus on a change, to the exclusion of other changes, and still enjoy yourself?

Yes. And here's why:

When you get that special stroke from that special someone, that stroke sets off all sorts of unique sensations and waves and energy patterns that transmit through your nervous system and up into your brain. It's the same with many other things, such as when you eat a delicious food, or drive in a fast car, or view some beautiful scenery. The stimulus patterns that your mind perceives and focuses upon are very unique. And their high-level of uniqueness makes them enjoyable.

It's because the change in your perception, caused by these stimulus patterns, is so very unique that you are able to enjoy it to the exclusion of other changes.

Think about your favorite food. Maybe it's chocolate éclairs smothered in sautéed escargot. Okay, so you have a strange appetite. But if this is truly your favorite dish it's because it sets off patterns of taste sensations in your mind that are very unique.

Pleasure can be caused from experiencing unique patterns. But unique patterns can't be experienced without first going through the same process that you go through when you experience pain. Your mind must focus, causing a loss of some of the natural uniqueness that arises from all the billions of nerve endings in your body. Therefore, you must give up some of your natural uniqueness in order to gain uniqueness from energy patterns.

It's just like investing. It takes money to make money. You must sacrifice some money first, by investing it in a market, before you can realize a capital gain. In the same way, you must sacrifice some natural uniqueness, by investing it in focus, in order to achieve an overall gain in uniqueness.

You sacrifice uniqueness by focusing. I'll show you what I mean. Let's go back to your chocolate éclair that is smothered in sautéed escargot. When you take a bite of this exotic dish, a taste sensation will strike your brain. This will then capture your focus and lead your awareness into focusing on the taste sensation. Your awareness will then spend most of its time on the taste sensation, and little time on anything else. And this will cause an overall decline in natural uniqueness. It's like a high priest thrusting a knife into the heart of a young virgin. Natural uniqueness is sacrificed.

So where's the payout? How will you be rewarded for such a sacrifice? If uniqueness is sacrificed, wouldn't you experience a decline in your experience of enjoyment? No, not necessarily. Because the gods look favorably upon virgin sacrifices, when they're done right. Ask any Mayan and he will tell you so.

The payout comes from the uniqueness of the taste sensation itself. Remember, this is your favorite food. It's your favorite because the taste of it stimulates very unique patterns of energy for your mind to perceive. These unique patterns of energy more than offset the decline in natural uniqueness caused by your mind's focus.

In other words, you invest uniqueness by sacrificing it through focus. But you receive uniqueness back, from the stimulus pattern that your focus

causes your mind to perceive. When you receive more uniqueness back than what you invested, you experience pleasure.

But if your investment goes bad and you receive less uniqueness back than what you invested, you experience displeasure. The displeasure will be in the form of discomfort. Or even outright pain (if your investment turns out to be really bad—such as if you bought the Brooklyn Bridge).

But of course, you are wise and have made a good investment. After all, how could an investment in chocolate éclairs smothered in sautéed escargot possibly go bad?

How?! I'll tell you how! Let me assume the place of your broker for a moment, and give you a little investment advice:

Buy low and sell high.

Here's a few things that could go wrong with your dessert dish decision. First, let's say a tinge of the sautéed escargot is so strong that it captures a little too much of your focus. This will cause you to buy high. This is because it will cause you to sacrifice a little too much of your natural uniqueness. Meanwhile, the uniqueness produced from the taste sensation may not be sufficient to offset the high amount of sacrificed natural uniqueness. So you will, in effect, sell low, by getting back less uniqueness than what you invested.

And this will cause you to feel displeasure from the taste. In fact, it will feel kind of like you just stuck your fork down your throat. You will gag like a cattle rustler at a lynching. A lovely sight for the other diners at your table.

Another thing that could go wrong would be if you ate your favorite dessert dish every day, day after day. Over time you would become so familiar with the taste, that it would grow less and less unique to you. Finally, it would begin producing less uniqueness than the amount of natural uniqueness you'd be sacrificing from your focus. And so you would begin to dislike the taste of your once-favorite dish.

And so it is with all pleasure. The patterns your mind perceives must be unique. And they must not be so strong that they sacrifice more of the uniqueness you naturally possess, than the uniqueness that they produce.

For instance, if you set your lawn on fire with gasoline, unique patterns will be created for your mind to perceive. But you may also worry over the damage the fire is causing (or may cause, if it spreads). Emotional worry is caused by strong mental focus. Such focus causes a sacrifice of so much of your uniqueness, that it decreases the amount of overall uniqueness you are able to experience. This is bad news for pyromaniacs, and it's probably why they only set other people's property on fire.

I have compared pain and pleasure with the sacrifice of virgins, and with investment strategy. Therefore I am going to dub this theory, Virgin Investment Theory. Virgin Investment Theory states the following:

The uniqueness that you naturally experience, without focus, is as precious as a young virgin. Do not sacrifice it without making sure you get something really good in return. Be a wise investor by buying low and selling high. Ideally, try to invest small amounts of your natural uniqueness, through lightly-applied focus, while receiving large amounts of produced uniqueness in return. But if you must buy high, then try to sell even higher.

Does it sound too good to be true, to be able to invest a small amount of natural uniqueness, through lightly-applied focus, while receiving large amounts of produced uniqueness in return? Well, maybe so if you're focusing real hard on the words of this book. That is why I've tried to interject some entertainment value in this treatise. I know that focusing hard is just like buying high. You're investing a lot of mental energy, and this loss of your natural uniqueness may hurt a little. Maybe it gives you a headache. So by interjecting some entertainment value, I hope that at least you will sell high as well. If you receive more uniqueness from the entertainment value, than the natural uniqueness you are losing from focus, then although you are buying high, at least you are selling higher.

And I also hope that the long-term value from this initial high investment of focus will pay dividends to you for years to come. I hope the information in this book will steer you into avenues that lead you to ever-burgeoning payouts of more and more uniqueness and enjoyment, for the remainder of your days in this world. And if it does, you will over the long run have bought relatively low and sold relatively high.

But screw that. There are more immediate rewards available for you right at this very moment. Wonderful bountiful rewards that will produce an avalanche of uniqueness from very little investment in focus. All you have to do is set this book down and reach over to where that little flat rectangular thing is sitting near you. Yeah, that's it.

Your TV controller.

Now turn on the boob tube and channel surf until you've found something really cool, like the Cartoon Network. Now you can kick back, and for the teeniest price of a tiny smidgen of focus, all kinds of unique patterns of entertainment will blare your way.

It won't pay out in long-term dividends, but the short-term dividends will feel really good. Because you are buying low and selling out high.

What the hell. I myself have invested quite a chunk of my focus into writing this chapter. I need a break. No one's going to buy this book

anyways. It's not like I'm gonna get a big return from my investment. So I think I'm going to do the same thing. It's off to the cartoon channel I go! "Honey, can you fetch me a root beer!"

THINK UNIQUE, AND FEEL A THRILL

Okay I'm back. SpongeBob SquarePants wasn't on, so I lost interest and am ready to resume writing. But while I was away sucking down a root beer, it occurred to me that we haven't yet discussed how your thoughts produce emotions. For instance, when I think about SpongeBob SquarePants, I feel both amused and envious. I feel amused because the way he looks and acts provides quick little tiny episodes of unique experiences for me.

It's the same way that a good joke works. The first time you hear it, the unique thought it suddenly inspires causes you to feel a sudden spike of enjoyment. You respond by feeling amused, and maybe by involuntarily laughing. But if someone keeps telling you the same joke over and over, familiarity quickly increases, and uniqueness quickly declines. And then, if you're being polite because it's your boss who's telling you the joke, the best you might do is muster some fake laughter.

Oh yeah, SpongeBob SquarePants leaves me feeling envious as well. After all, what red-blooded American male wouldn't want to live in Bikini Bottom?

But it isn't SpongeBob himself that makes me feel an emotion. Rather, it's the thought processes that his character inspires. The way people think determines the emotions that they feel.

Your very thoughts produce mental patterns that can be quite unique. And this uniqueness can be very enjoyable or very painful, depending upon how well you're buying low and selling high with your focus. If you imagine yourself bathing in a pool of gold coins and hundred dollar bills, you will likely feel pleasure from the uniqueness of this mental image. But if you imagine receiving a certified letter from the IRS, you will likely feel pain, due to the strong focus of worry that this image generates.

The pleasure and pain that our thoughts generate are emotions. We produce our own emotions, just by the way we think. Our brains are veritable drama machines.

Positive emotions are pleasurable, while negative emotions are painful. And what determines whether an emotion will be positive or negative, is the amount of uniqueness produced by your thoughts, versus the amount of natural uniqueness sacrificed through the mental focus you utilize to produce the thoughts.

But you say, “Hey I’ve gotcha now!” Oh, you think you’re so smart. (By the way, thinking you’re real smart ought to generate pleasurable emotions of smugness and pride). You realize there are some thoughts you think that are not very unique, yet still generate feelings of pleasure. For instance, a paycheck is a rather mundane thing—especially if you’ve been working at the same job for the past 20 years. There’s nothing much unique about your paycheck, yet you still like thinking about it. Well first, don’t admit this to your boss or you’ll never get that raise you’ve been pestering for.

Now imagine getting your paycheck every day, rather than every two weeks. Wouldn’t that be nice? Now imagine getting your paycheck every hour of every day. Better still, right? No, not really. If you were rolling in the dough like this, pretty soon you’d start getting rather bored with paychecks. Not that you’d turn down the money. With all that money, you’d probably hire a financial assistant to cultivate the greenery, while you go off and pursue your favorite hobby—like hunting ducks in Argentina or tasting wine in Italy. The last thing you’d want to think about is another paycheck.

Why? Because it would no longer be unique. Uniqueness is what makes a thought exciting. When you only get a paycheck every two weeks, the waiting time between paydays is long enough to maintain a certain high level of uniqueness with each check you receive. Thus the thought of a paycheck is still somewhat pleasurable.

Suppose you listened to your favorite song over and over again, all day long? How long would it take before you started to detest the song, or even the thought of the song? And how hard would you start trying to get the damned tune out of your head? Here again uniqueness is dependent upon familiarity. The more familiar you are with something, the less unique it becomes to your mind. And therefore, the less enjoyable it will be.

I hope you have learned something new here, about uniqueness. If you have, you have probably enjoyed reading this chapter. Because, of course, a unique concept is an enjoyable concept, even when it’s a concept about uniqueness.

So now that you appreciate (hopefully) the one-of-a-kind value of uniqueness, you’re probably wondering how you can add more uniqueness to your life. How exactly do you seek unique, and make your life happier?

Well come along with me, and we’ll find the answer by taking a ride on a unicorn.

UNICORN THEORY

I'd love to describe uniqueness for you, so that you can recognize it whenever you see it, and grab hold of it and make it a part of your life. But unfortunately, uniqueness defies description. That's because what is unique to you now will not be unique later.

Yeah, it's a dilemma. A fucking dilemma! Uniqueness simply cannot be contained in a convenient formula, system of thought, or method of living. Uniqueness runs wild as a unicorn. It's elusive. It's rare. It's constantly transforming itself. It's even more elusive than me, when I'm trying to avoid religious people at my front door.

Spotting something unique is like spotting a unicorn. There it stands in its splendor and majesty. You can hardly believe it. So you rub your eyes, look again, and it's gone.

UNICORN THEORY

Which brings us to Unicorn Theory. Unicorn Theory states that unique experiences can be as elusive and rare as spotting a unicorn. And if you've ever spotted one, you'll know what I'm talking about. Doesn't happen very often, does it?

But when it does happen, it's one hell of a thrill. So wouldn't it be nice if it happened more often than once in a blue moon?

My Auto-Enjoyment Theory, in Chapter 4, asserts that life is automatically enjoyed. I believe in this theory. I think most people are automatically enjoying life, and are happy. In fact, I think you are probably happy right now, even though you're reading this book. Now that's some strong happiness!

And if that's the case, why the hell did I write this book? Why am I wasting my time preaching to the choir, mailing junk mail to wrecking yards, and sending sardines to Sardinia?

And before you start guessing, it has nothing to do with the terms of any probation, requiring me to have gainful employment. Believe me, nobody is going to buy this book. There's nothing gainful about this writing endeavor. Just don't tell my probation officer.

I'm writing this book because I think it can be helpful to lots of people. And if so, that will make me famous. I lust for fame. I want the experience of punching out irritating paparazzi. I want to make the talk show rounds, so I can say all the politically incorrect stuff to get canceled from culture. Culture? Bah! Who needs it?

I want the name of Tippy Gnu to become a household word. Just what is a household word, anyway? Most of the words I hear around my household are of the four-letter variety. Regardless, I want that. I think it would be cool to have my name uttered in every household. Even if it replaces words like, shit, damn, or fuck, I can think of no higher honor.

If you're happy, and you probably are, I think you can still benefit from this book. And if you aren't happy, then I know you'll benefit. But if you're happy, this book can help you to be even happier. Happiness is a good thing, in my opinion. So why not get more of a good thing?

This book teaches that change produces happiness, since life is change, and life is automatically enjoyed. It also teaches that the more unique the change, the more happiness it will produce. And that's where this book can be helpful. I'm going to show you how to increase the uniqueness of your experiences.

But there's one problem. We must contend with Unicorn Theory. Remember, it states that unique experiences can be as elusive and rare as spotting a unicorn.

Now technically, all experiences are unique to some degree, because no two experiences are exactly the same. So this theory refers to experiences that are very unique. Unique in a standout way. The kind of experiences that leave you feeling thrilled, intrigued, fascinated, or otherwise very happy.

When I wrote the Unicorn Theory, I wrote it with the attitude of a Philadelphia lawyer. I was being slick and sly. So check the theory out again, and read it carefully. Note my use of the word, "can," when I say, "unique experiences can be as elusive and rare as spotting a unicorn." Consider that it doesn't say "are." Yeah, clever of me, huh?

Now I have an out. What I mean by all this slick bafflegab is, that unique experiences CAN be elusive and rare, but they don't have to be. If

you know how to search for unique experiences, then they can occur fairly often.

In other words, you have to know how to hunt unicorns (using unicorns as a metaphor for unique experiences), before you can spot them frequently. And after you learn the skill of the hunt, you'll find yourself surrounded by these magical creatures. They won't be so elusive and rare, after all. In fact, you'll have so many unicorns around you, with their horns up your ass, that you won't quite know what to do with them all.

It's important to note that everybody catches a unicorn now and then. Life has enough odd twists and turns to allow these one-horned critters to make occasional appearances in anyone's life, just by chance.

But what I'm going to show is how to increase the odds, so that you'll catch more than you'll likely ever capture by depending upon pure, blind luck.

First, I'm going to reveal some rather obvious strategies. Conventional stuff you've probably already thought of. Then I'll unveil an unconventional strategy. The unconventional strategy is not so obvious. It's a secret weapon for hunting unicorns that is more effective than any nightscope, fancy bait, or unicorn whistle ever invented.

With the conventional, obvious strategy, you're chasing unicorns. With the unconventional, not so obvious strategy, you're tracking the path of unicorns, and discovering where they come from. It's a mystical, magical, meditative path, which we'll get to soon.

But first, let's learn how to chase the unicorns that have already made it down that path.

CHASING UNICORNS

In this chapter we'll chase unicorns, as they scatter helter-skelter, hither and yon. But in the next chapter we'll save our breath and leisurely traipse down a meditative path, leading to the source of unicorns.

Chasing unicorns involves following some rather obvious strategies. And the most obvious, if you haven't already guessed, is to keep an open mind. Hmm, who would've thunk?

AN OPEN MIND

In this book, a unicorn symbolizes a unique experience. And it's very apparent that if you want to have more unique experiences than your average closed-minded person, you have to keep your mind open enough to involve yourself in unique experiences.

It may be tempting to stay in a safe little corner, but your life will always be boring if you're not willing to take a risk and try out new things.

I can provide all kinds of examples of unique things to do, such as, visit a rattlesnake zoo, read *War and Peace*, climb Mount Kilimanjaro, attend clown school, pick wild strawberries, paint your bathroom pink, learn rocket science, or buy a pet snapping turtle. But I don't know your life. Maybe you've done all these things already.

What's unique to one person may not be so unique to another. So nobody can tell you what is unique. It's personal. You have to figure it out for yourself. And you can only do that if you maintain an open mind.

One reason why we get stuck in a rut is because ruts are relatively safe. Even when ruts involves situations that others might find dangerous, they're relatively safe to us rut-dwellers because we're accustomed to such situations. They're the devil we know.

You may feel content in your rut, and if so, good for you. But if you want to have more excitement and happiness in life than your mere contentment, you must be willing to take a risk, and step away from your routine.

And there is a risk. Unicorns can be frisky and unpredictable. And they have sharp horns. If you're not careful, you can be skewered.

It's the same with unique experiences. Because such experiences are so unique, they're unpredictable. They can mess you up badly. So they must be approached with caution.

Yes, use caution. But they must be approached if you want to experience them. You'll never catch a unicorn by running and hiding from it. No, you must chase the unicorn. Only then can you feel the thrill and happiness from having such a creature in your possession.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

Another obvious strategy for chasing unicorns, is to be on the lookout for them. Unicorns tend to be elusive creatures, and you're not likely to spot one by staring at the ground. So remind yourself now and then to pay attention.

When you consciously try to identify unique experiences, you'll become amazed as to how many are out there, right under your nose. Unicorns are masters at camouflage.

For instance, have you been casually observing over the years, your wife knitting sweaters? Have you ever wondered how she pulls off such craftwork? Well, there's a unicorn for you, right there. You can learn how to knit.

Are you mystified at how your husband can fix cars? There's a unicorn. Start helping him, or pick up a book on auto repair.

These are just a few tiny examples of how unicorns camouflage themselves, hiding in plain sight, to be spotted only by those who diligently keep on the lookout.

And this brings up my next conventional and obvious strategy for hunting, chasing, and capturing unicorns. The strategy of learning new things.

LEARNING

Areas of knowledge that are new to you always make for dandy unicorns, because, well, they are so new. Obviously.

There are many ways to learn something new. You can buy, borrow, or steal a book. This day and age there are zillions of books, due to the boom in self-publishing, so you have lots of unique reading material to choose from. In fact you chose this book, so you're already on your way to catching unicorns through the strategy of learning. And thank you very much.

You can also take a college course. Or change departments, where you work. Or google the hell out of subjects and learn stuff on the internet. Or observe carefully, the way people do things. Or just ask a lot of questions.

You can never run out of new, fascinating things to learn. Learning supplies a never-ending herd of unicorns to chase after and catch.

BE TRUSTWORTHY

There's one more strategy I'd like to point out. It's not as obvious as the others I've described, but I hope it will be obvious enough, once I point it out.

This is the strategy of being trustworthy.

Every human being we encounter possesses a treasure trove of uniqueness. Everyone has a different background from ourselves. They have different interests, different abilities, different viewpoints, and are different in a multitude of other ways. No two human beings are exactly alike. Not even Siamese twins.

Sometimes people don't appreciate how unique they are, but that's only because they live with themselves all the time. Imagine having to live with yourself all the time. How boring would that be?

We are all much more unique to others, than to ourselves. Therefore, we all have much to offer each other, whether we realize it or not. This makes us all unicorns.

There are different ways to catch human unicorns. One way is to hogtie him or her. Make this person your captive. Your slave. Hold the person against your will, and mulct all the uniqueness you can out of this unicorn.

That's not as far-fetched as it may sound. Slavery has been around, in one form or another, since human beings have walked the Earth. The classic form of whip and chain slavery went mostly extinct back in the 19th century. Well, except for with those who indulge in certain sexual proclivities, but that's a whole different kind of unicorn.

But other forms of "slavery" persist. For instance, spouses often become enslaved in their marriages, where the manipulations, threats, or

pressure from their partners makes it difficult for them to end the relationship.

Many jobs pay what is known as a "slave wage," where employees barely earn enough to stay alive.

And thefts, burglaries, fraud, and other crimes are common in our world. This to me is a form of slavery. After all, we have to work hard for the money and possessions we come to own. So when somebody steals from us, it's as if we've worked for the thief, for free. That's slavery, by any other name.

The problem with slavery, is that it can be hard to make slaves cooperate. After all, what is their incentive? And so, the master has to work hard, to make the slave work hard.

Slaves are also not likely to share much of themselves with those who exploit them. That would just leave them vulnerable to more exploitation. And so, when you try to force uniqueness from others, through slavery, you end up with far less uniqueness than they are capable of sharing with you.

When faced with tyranny, people tend to clam up, close up, and dry up, and make their best effort to passively rebel. If they don't actively rebel. This leaves the tyrant a lonely person. Tyrants miss out on the wonderful variety of qualities that make each and every one of us fascinating, unique beings. Unicorns, in fact.

So if you want to catch a lot of unicorns, try being trustworthy. Be harmless to others. And honor their freedom. Freedom is the most precious right that humans and any other being can possess. We must have freedom so we can pursue unicorns, untrammelled, and find our happiness.

When you avoid harming and enslaving others, and when you honor their freedom, you make it possible to win their trust. And when you're trustworthy, they're most likely to share themselves with you. They'll share the things that make them so unique. And in this way, you'll capture a unicorn.

Which must sound kind of ironic, because you have to allow unicorns to be free, before you can catch them. And the way you hold onto them, is by continuing to allow their freedom.

Trustworthiness is won in other ways also. For instance, when you take care of yourself in a competent way, you free others from the burden of taking care of you. So the more independent you are, or at least try to be, the more likely you are to win the trust of others.

Being competent in what you do for a living is also a good way to win trust. Nobody has to cover for you. And your employer or customers receive quality for the money they pay you.

Quietly and anonymously helping others can also win trust. The way this works is by the way it affects your demeanor. People can sense untrustworthiness. It shows up in the little things we may do. It displays in many ways that we have no control over, including in the way we fidget, or the way we express ourselves, and in the things we pay attention to.

Often our demeanor is displayed in such subtle ways, it registers in the subconscious of others. They get a feeling about you, that they can't quite put their finger on. But that feeling may lead them to either trust you or not trust you.

So if you've been quietly cheating and thieving from others without ever getting caught, it will still show up in your demeanor, and lead to being distrusted. Nobody ever gets away with anything.

And neither can you get away with quietly and anonymously helping others. This too will show up in your demeanor. While you are being all modest and secretive, your demeanor will be inadvertently announcing to the world just how trustworthy you are.

And that little trick will help you to catch unicorns, even when you're not even trying to catch them.

I hope I've passed trustworthiness off as an obvious and conventional way to catch unicorns and enrich your life with unique experiences. And I hope it makes sense.

But the next hunting technique is a whole different ballgame. There's nothing conventional about it, nor anything obvious. And it's hard to make sense of it. It's a secret weapon you can use, to corral unicorns *before* you have to chase them.

And those unicorns are waiting for you right now, with heads raised, ears perked, and nostrils flared. Over in the next chapter.

ON THE PATH OF UNICORNS

The Path of Unicorns is a meditative path. That's why I call it a "path." It seems any practice involving meditation is touted as some sort of path.

People get very religious about meditation. They treat this exercise of the mind as if it was sacred, and must be regarded with an air of reverence. And so they claim that when you meditate, you are following a path. And apparently, this path leads to a holy destination, which they refer to as Enlightenment, Xanadu, Nirvana, or even, Heaven.

But don't worry, I won't be getting all holier-than-thou on you. Nor do I expect meditation to be sacralized, by anyone. So you won't have to join a religion, or quit your current faith.

I'll admit though, that meditation has a numinous quality to it, that lends toward metaphysical reflections. So if you want to get all spiritual about it, I completely understand. Go ahead and dig out your incense, mala beads, and bodhisattva statue, and have a blast!

And if you really want meditation to be sacralized, I don't mind. In fact, I'll help out by suggesting a religious sounding name for this path. How about Unicorniks? I think that's a fitting name, since I'm using unicorns as symbols of unique experiences, and since the goal of this path is to increase our unique experiences.

This is fun, naming things, so now I'm going to get carried away and name something else. I'm going to call all the theories I presented in Chapters 2 through 4, Unikronics. This distinguishes theory from practice. Unikronics discusses the mechanics of our minds, with regard to how our minds produce uniqueness and happiness. But Unicorniks involves putting the theory into practice, by chasing unicorns, and by meditating.

And so we have Unikonics and Unicorniks. I've already presented Unikonics, in this book, up to Chapter 4, as well as much of Unicorniks, beginning with Chapter 5. But I'm not done with Unicorniks yet. Because we haven't discussed the most important part of the practice. And that is, meditation.

Chasing unicorns, as discussed in the last chapter, can be very beneficial. But by itself, it is not meditative. It can augment the meditative practice, and thus be part of the Path of Unicorns, and I highly recommend it for that purpose. But nothing beats actual meditation for producing unique experiences and happiness. No, nothing even comes close.

That's because meditation goes straight to the source of unicorns.

THE SOURCE

I assume that all things ultimately come from Mind. By "Mind" (with a capital "M") I mean, any and all minds, including yours, mine, and that of all other living creatures. And this is because I'm paranoid. I'm scared to death of death. I love life and want it to go on forever. So I like to think this mind of mine, and that mind of yours, and all other minds, have been around forever, and will last forever. They are the creators and keepers of this universe.

I can't say that I believe in eternal life, because I haven't seen enough scientific proof to honestly assert that. But there's no scientific proof against it, either. So I like to assume that we all live forever, while covering my ass and acknowledging that my assumption is just an assumption. To me it's depressing to think that this Earthly life is all there is, and that after we physically die our minds are permanently annihilated.

It could be true, who knows? But damn, it's just so frigging depressing to make that assumption. And so I prefer to assume the opposite. I assume that our minds somehow continue on, after our bodies kick the bucket. Either way is an assumption, but I like my assumption best. I could be living in a Fool's Paradise by making this assumption, but I'd rather be a happy fool than a depressed genius.

Now, when I assume all things come from Mind, that includes unicorns. I assume our minds collectively created this universe, and thus created all the unique things found within it. Don't ask me how to explain the physics behind this creation, because I don't know. I never was good at Physics. Besides, it's just an assumption. I could very well be wrong. (Notice the ass-covering here?)

But play along with me and I'll try to make all this metaphysical maundering interesting, even if you're a big, fat skeptic. Consider that

if all unique things come from our minds, then if we want to add uniqueness to our lives, and become happier than we currently are, we must travel the path that leads to Mind. After all, Mind is the source.

I call this, walking the Path of Unicorns. Or, Unicorniks.

When I want something, I've always been an advocate of going straight to the source. That's why I was once a government employee. I needed money. The government prints money. So I went straight to the source, and applied for a government job.

Now, after 27 years of dedicated federal service, I'm retired and shower in money every day. Yep, one of my favorite pastimes is sitting in my walk-in vault, counting out 10,000 dollars, and then tossing it over my head, in a glorious green shower.

I used to do that with my gold coins, but damn, those things hurt when they clink off the top of my skull. So now I just use soft, lightweight, Ben Franklins.

The point I'm trying to make is that going to the source of something tends to be where most of it is at. And I believe when we go straight to our minds, we can find more unicorns frolicking around than we'll ever be able to find and catch elsewhere. Because unicorns, or that is, unique experiences, are ultimately inspired and generated by our minds. Mind is their point of conception and birth.

MINDFULNESS

The way to go straight to the mind is through something called "mindfulness." You've probably already heard of this, as it's become quite popular in our New Age world. Everyone seems to have hopped on the bandwagon, when it comes to mindfulness.

They parrot hackneyed slogans that we've become boringly familiar with, such as: "Wake up! Pay attention! Find yourself! Look within! Live in the moment! Be mindful! Be present! Just be!"

And yet, the world remains as nutty as ever. You'd think with all the mindfulness going on, everyone would have conquered their crazy minds by now, and we'd all be living in a utopia. But so far, mindfulness has not cured the world of very many ills.

The problem is that the practice of mindfulness is much easier said than done. Mindfulness is fucking hard! And most people, including me, are fucking lazy. So few people stick with mindfulness long enough to enjoy most of its benefits.

But it works, for those who do stick with it. Lazy as I am, I have persisted and persisted with the practice of mindfulness, for decades, and have reaped its harvests over and over again.

It hasn't transfigured me into a virtuous citizen, nor a saint, nor a perfectly enlightened Buddha. No, mindfulness doesn't do that. That's the job of purity. Those who want to be virtuous should forget about mindfulness and practice purity, instead.

Purity is practiced by putting on a fake smile, and claiming to be mindful all the time. Then you do good works in full view of everyone, and always have a smarmy comment on hand for anyone who doubts your pure intentions.

Purity is for winning social status within your workplace, community, church, temple, or wherever the hell you're trying to be elevated to sainthood.

Those who are truly mindful tend to keep quiet about it. This is because as difficult as it is to practice, it's ten times more difficult to describe. Just what the hell is mindfulness? For those who've experienced it over protracted periods of time, it's something mystical and magical that defies explanation.

All things come from the mind. So when you direct your mind onto the mind, you're pointing it at the raw material of the universe. This material can only be sensed. It cannot be properly described with words. Words can never come close.

Perhaps I'm slow-witted, but it seems from my experience, that you become aware of this raw material slowly. It dawns upon you gradually, over time, and never right away, all at once. And maybe this is why the world hasn't been helped much by mindfulness. I think most people don't stick with it long enough to develop such awareness.

It's a profound awareness. It's so profound, that once it occurs to you, you're hooked. It's too late. You can never be unmindful again. Now you are chained like a slave to the arduous task of inward-looking, self-awareness.

It's worse than being a heroin addict. You can quit heroin, with some effort, but you can never quit mindfulness, once you reach the point of no return. But unlike heroin, you're not hooked right from the start. No, the addiction develops gradually, until finally it has gained so much steam, trying to stop it would be like trying to push back a runaway Union Pacific freight train.

You might wonder how long it takes to become so addicted. I don't know. Perhaps it differs from person to person. For me, I'd say it was at

least one year, and perhaps as many as five or ten. I can't pinpoint the exact date the addiction took me over.

If you practice mindfulness long term, I believe you'll become addicted, just like me. I just can't guarantee the time frame. But one day you'll wake up and realize that you're stuck with this habit. And your life will never be the same. Sometime between the time you begin the practice, and the time you realize you're hooked to it, your life will transform permanently.

So just what is mindfulness? As I've averred to before, I don't know. I can't explain it. I can't describe it. It goes well beyond words. Words don't do it justice.

But I can describe the practice. I can tell you what to do, to be mindful and catch lots of unicorns, and then it will be up to you to try it, and keep doing it. And if you keep doing it, you will learn, in due time, just exactly what mindfulness really is.

THE PRACTICE

Or should this subheading say, "The Practices" (plural)? I believe there are as many different ways to practice mindfulness as there are meditation books and gurus. No, there are more. Much more.

But I won't get into all that, or I'd have to write a library filled with very dull tomes, frequented by bespectacled wonks whose job would be to write more books to fill additional libraries. So I'll just narrow it down to two basic practices, to keep this short and simple. This will be all you'll need to know, anyway. Just stick with the basics and you'll be alright.

I identify two basic practices of mindfulness, which I label "formal," and "informal."

FORMAL MINDFULNESS

Formal mindfulness has been bastardized and co-opted by those who practice purity, for thousands of years. It's for spiritual athletes. It's for those who want to storm the gates of heaven. And it's a powerful virtue signal that can win exaltation to positions of high status and authority within many religious organizations.

Formal mindfulness can make you rich and famous, and help you to acquire many millions of followers, worldwide. But it also has its uses.

Formal mindfulness is useful for introducing you to the basic essentials of informal mindfulness. And it can help you to develop and maintain concentration, making informal mindfulness an easier practice.

It isn't necessary, though. Informal mindfulness is absolutely essential, but formal mindfulness isn't. It can augment informal mindfulness, but it can never replace it.

Formal mindfulness is sort of like cummerbunds, tuxedos, and evening gowns. It's like the partaking in solemn rituals, or sitting upright and keeping your elbows off the table, while dining. In short, it's the trappings of snobs. Religious snobs.

It's nothing very practical, and something informal hillbillies like me have fun scoffing at. But even so, I'm willing to grudgingly admit, it does have its uses.

Formal mindfulness is also commonly known as meditation. It's the kind of meditation where all you are doing is meditating. It's a singular task. There's no multitasking involved.

The most basic form of meditation, in my opinion, is to sit or lie still, and watch your thoughts rise and fall. This is debatable, and I'm sure some zealot would love to lop off my head for teaching such heresy, but I'm going to stand my ground and call this the most basic form of formal meditation.

So now my body is over here, standing its ground. Meanwhile, my head is over there, thinking about all of this.

Some people prefer to sit, as they practice formal mindfulness. That's fine. Go ahead, find a comfortable chair, and sit and meditate.

But when some people sit, they prefer it to be atop a zafu, with legs crossed in the lotus position, before an altar of incense and Buddha statues.

Okay, that's fine, too. But be warned that over the years, the lotus position, and even the half-lotus, can wear out your knees terribly. There are many seasoned meditators that walk with a limp, due to all the damage done to the ligaments of their patellas. So approach the lotus with fear and caution.

Some like to chant a short mantra before meditating. Sure, go ahead. That's beautiful, baby! Let's hear your, "Om Mani Padme Hum!" or your "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo," or your "Buddham Saranam Gacchami, etc."

Such chants can be pleasing to the ear and soothing to the soul, putting you in a receptive spirit for meditation. But they're not necessary, and neither are all the other trappings of formal mindfulness.

To keep things as simple as possible, here are the bare essentials for how to meditate, without the trappings. In my opinion. Please, put down that machete, this is just my opinion!

Sit in a chair. Or, as I prefer, lie flat on your back in bed, for beditation. Get it? Beditation. Okay, let's move on.

But first, let me warn you that if you lie in bed while meditating, there's a good chance you'll fall asleep. But this can also happen while you're sitting. It's just less likely, which is why many meditation masters insist that you sit. Who the hell wants their students to fall asleep on them?

But I don't care. Fall asleep all you want. Sleep is good for you. And when you wake up, just resume meditating. And in this way your meditation, or beditation, will leave you feeling refreshed and energized.

Now that you're sitting or lying down, let's continue this instruction:

Breathe in slowly, and while inhaling, watch your breath. Observe the sensation of your rising abdomen, or the feel of air rushing into your lungs, or the breeze against the nares of your nostrils.

Then slowly exhale, and observe again, the falling of your abdomen, or the feel of air leaving your lungs, or the breeze against the nares of your nostrils.

It matters not where you put the point of your focus, whether it be your abdomen, lungs, or nose. Leave it to the whim of the moment. Or go with that which feels most prominent.

After a few of these breaths, your concentration will strengthen. Now, turn your attention to your mind. Observe your thoughts as they rise and fall.

Some meditators are under the impression that the purpose of meditation is to rid your mind of runaway, distracting thoughts. And so, they try to let go of their thoughts, then keep them pushed away so they never return.

This is awful goddamned hard work, and can give you a big headache. Also, it's not necessary. Try it if you want, but don't worry if you decide to give up. It's exhausting.

A less tiring approach is to simply watch your thoughts as they rise and fall, and keep letting them rise and fall naturally. Now in order to do this, you must pull a piece of your brain out of your skull. Sounds icky, I know, but it's the only way.

But thankfully, I'm speaking metaphorically. By pulling a piece of your brain out of your skull, I mean you must set aside a part of your mind, and give it the task of observing. And what it observes is what your mind is doing. It observes your thinking.

In other words, you turn your mind upon itself, to make a self-observation. This is what is called, "self awareness," by meditators, or "metacognition" by those with a more scientific orientation. It's being in the present moment. It's seeing things exactly as they are, without comment or opinion.

It is a passionless, detached, objective observation of your own mind, by a piece of your own mind.

However, it isn't easy to pull off. You'll find that when you do this, your thoughts start playing hide-and-go-seek and it becomes very difficult to observe them. It's ironic. Watching your thoughts makes your thoughts disappear.

Thus, when your thoughts arise, you focus your attention on them, and that makes them fall. This is what is often referred to by meditation masters as the rise and fall of thoughts.

This rise and fall happens because your mind can only do one thing at a time. It can think, and it can observe itself think. But the catch is, it can't do both at the same time. This is an ironic thing about meditation. Just when you remember to observe your thoughts, they disappear like darkness under a spotlight.

That's because it's impossible to think, and observe yourself think, at the same time. Yet that's what meditators are trying to do.

And yet a common complaint from meditators is that they can't stop their minds from thinking. Well, that's obviously because they can't maintain self-awareness for any great length of time.

Self-awareness is the fucking hard part about mindfulness and meditation. It's hard to sustain it over long periods of time. And so you have to keep reminding yourself to be self-aware. But it's very hard to remember to remind yourself.

This I believe, is why few people persist at the practice of mindfulness. It's why so many give up quickly. It's frustrating. They don't like the constant failure, and arduous mental toil that is so much a part of mindfulness. So they say, "to hell with unicorns, I quit!"

Also, setting aside the time required for formal mindfulness can be prohibitive. Imagine meditating for an hour in the morning, then arriving to work an hour late. Try telling your boss, "Sorry I'm late, but I was very busy watching thoughts rise and fall in my mind. It was important."

That's a good way to become a full-time meditator, while checking the help wanted ads.

I can't do much about the frustrating and mentally difficult aspect to mindfulness. I can only encourage you to keep at it. Be assured that it gets easier with practice.

But as for the time requirement, there's a viable solution. And no, it does not require time travel, or making all the clocks on Earth stand still.

No, you can skip formal mindfulness, and just practice informal mindfulness. Informal mindfulness involves multitasking. So it can be practiced at any time, and any place. Even at night in your sleep.

So get up and cook dinner, take a shower, and vacuum the floors. And while you're at it, I'll tell you all about informal mindfulness.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS

Have you ever kept your eyes open during a prayer? What?! You sinner, you! That'll be ten thousand Hail Mary's and a donation of your paycheck into the church coffers.

But at least now you have an idea of what informal mindfulness is about. I call it this, but it goes by many labels. Some call it every-minute meditation. Other labels include: working meditation, ongoing meditation, and perpetual meditation. Some simply call it mindfulness, as if it were a different animal from formal, sitting meditation.

But it isn't that different. It's all mindfulness, whether formal or informal, so don't get too hung up on the labels.

Informal mindfulness involves watching your mind while going about the everyday activities of life. It's not formal, like sitting cross-legged with your eyes closed or half-closed, or like kneeling in prayer with your eyes fully closed. Why do religious leaders insist that you pray with your eyes closed, anyway? Is it so they can pick your pocket more easily?

Rest assured, you're less likely to have your pocket picked if you practice informal mindfulness. No, your eyes are generally wide-open, and you're very aware of everything going on around you. And behind you.

You're very aware because you've pulled out a piece of your brain, and it's sitting outside your skull with a big eyeball, watching everything you're thinking, saying, and doing.

Ick.

No actually, this is a metaphor again. You've set aside part of your mind, and that part is watching all that you do.

Now, when you do this, your thoughts tend to disappear, the same as I've noted above with formal mindfulness. And when your thoughts disappear it becomes nearly impossible to get anything done. After all, you have to think about what you're doing before you can do it. At least if you want to do it with any intelligence.

And so it would seem impossible for you to function, while being informally mindful. But not so. Go ahead and try it, and you'll see that it can actually be done quite proficiently. This is because your mind is very good at switching back and forth between metacognition and conventional, unself-aware cognition. It can switch back and forth instantaneously, many times per second.

But only if you're loosely mindful. If you try to be tightly mindful, so that you're perfectly mindful all the time, then you'll become as helpless as a corpse. Your mind simply won't be able to do two things at the exact same time.

Loose mindfulness is why I call it informal mindfulness. You're not trying to prove anything to anybody, as you might feel tempted to do while formally meditating. No, you're simply trying to function in the real world, while paying some attention to the goings-on within your mind.

You have the power to adjust your level of self-awareness. You can be strongly self-aware, while helpless to do much of anything, or you can be weakly self-aware, and capable of doing much.

Different things we do in our everyday lives, require different levels of attention and concentration. If we're just picking our nose, we can be more mindful than if we're performing brain surgery, or defusing a pipe bomb.

The more you must devote your mind to concentrating on the task at hand, the less mindful you must be, if you want to be successful at it. So I'm not asking you to be very mindful while engaging in a critical operation, such as fusing a patient's left and right brain hemispheres together. But you can be a little tiny bit mindful, if you want to. Just make sure your malpractice insurance is paid up.

The more engrossed your mind becomes in something, such as a good book or television show, the less mindful you will likely be. But in less critical situations, you can be more mindful if you want to be, and still successfully accomplish the task. You might find yourself reading a little more slowly, or missing a few good lines from the TV show. But since there's nothing highly critical at stake, no disaster is likely to result.

This is a good thing, because as we go about our daily routine we usually find ourselves engrossed in things that are not critical. Hell, most of life is filled with trivial details and distractions. This is fertile ground for practicing informal mindfulness. And yet it's very challenging ground, because the mind is always at play, daydreaming and getting deeply involved in unimportant ponderings. And so, it's easy to forget to be mindful.

Every-minute meditation is never easy. It requires much persistence. And it requires much patience with yourself, and much self-forgiveness. Many times, you'll catch yourself after having gone for hours, or maybe the entire day, without being an ounce mindful. And then you'll kick yourself and, hopefully, return to the self-observation of mindfulness.

It's the returning that's important. It's much more important than maintaining. It builds a self-discipline and devotion to this practice, that

will make the returning more and more habitual over time, until you're so damned hooked, you can't quit.

After decades of practice, I still forget to be mindful, many times a day. But I also remember many times a day, and then return to the practice. It's all about the returning. One must habitually keep returning, as soon as one remembers to be mindful.

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Gurus, meditation masters, and other experts often provide instructions for how to be mindful. These instructions can be useful, but always take them with a grain of salt. Ultimately, you must find your own way. It's up to you to determine the best way to be mindful.

A common instruction is to only do one thing at a time. Well in the real world, that's easier said than done. Life places many demands upon us, and sometimes we can't avoid engaging in more than one thing at a time.

Suppose you're frying a hamburger when the phone rings. And it's an important call. Then, while you're jabbering on the phone while flipping your burger, your kid walks through the front door with a stray dog she wants to keep. So now you have to scowl, while pointing to the door, while addressing an important question raised by the important person on the phone, while your hamburger burns on the stove.

Good luck being mindful during all that.

I like this instruction though, and I do try to limit myself to one thing at a time, whenever possible. This has a calming effect on my temperamental demeanor. It also forces me to simplify my life. And it makes mindfulness easier. But it isn't always possible, or advisable. One must be flexible about rules and instructions, if one is to survive in this complicated world.

Another common instruction is to repeat over and over in your mind, what you're doing in any given moment. For instance, if you're walking, repeat to yourself, "walking, walking, walking." If you're chewing food, repeat to yourself, "chewing, chewing, chewing." And so forth.

Be warned that if you do this with too much focus, you're likely to trip over your own shoes, or choke to death. You must adjust your mindfulness to the situation.

I find this instruction useful at times, when my mind is scattered and I'm having a very hard time being mindful. But I don't employ it often. Someone new to mindfulness might benefit from using it more frequently, though.

Another very common instruction is to watch your breath. That's because we always have breath while we are, uh, still breathing. So it's always there to watch. And it's neutral. There's no politically correct way to breathe or not breathe. Therefore, watching one's breath is not likely to excite one's passions.

It's a good instruction, in my view. But be careful about taking it too far. Watching one's breath is not the be-all and end-all to mindfulness.

And besides, what's wrong with exciting one's passions? Nothing at all. If you do this mindfully, you may gain some insights into just why your passions have become excited. And this will help you to understand a little more about yourself.

So be mindful of other things also, besides your breath. Be mindful when a stone fox or handsome hunk walks past you. Admire the view, and watch how it affects your impulses. Be mindful when handed a large sum of money, so you can be aware of all the avarice that consumes your heart like fire.

And be mindful while eating something delicious, like a chocolate bar. Don't waste all that good taste by following your breath. No, follow the flavor, as it sends your mouth to heaven and engorges your stomach.

THE MAIN BENEFIT OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has many benefits, but the main benefit is insight. That's my very strong and steadfast opinion, which I'm willing to swear on the twisty, pointy horn of any unicorn. And that's because insight is where the unicorns are at.

Also, to develop the most insight, you must be mindful of everything, and not just your breath. This is why I consider informal mindfulness to be superior to formal. In fact, I think it's essential, whereas formal mindfulness is optional. So don't fret it. You never have to practice formal mindfulness, if you don't want to.

But I do. I generally practice the formal stuff for about 15 minutes per day. Which is far less than most monks and meditation masters recommend, but I think it's enough. Maybe more than enough.

I practice while lying in bed, because I'm lazy. So it's actually beditation. But I've been known to skip days, and I've been known to be so tired, that I've slept straight through it, without getting in more than a few seconds of meditation.

I find that formal mindfulness helps me to build my concentration for the task of informal mindfulness. With formal mindfulness I can concentrate very hard on watching my mind, without anything going awry.

I liken it to a baseball player who stands in the on-deck circle swinging a weighted bat. When it's his turn at the plate, his muscles are toned and ready for the lighter bat he now wields, allowing him to swing it with greater ease.

But no ballplayer takes a weighted bat with him to the plate, to swing at real pitches. So it is with informal mindfulness. You're engaging in the real, everyday activities of this world, unlike with formal mindfulness. And to focus on these activities, you have to apply your mindfulness with a lighter touch.

This gives you an opportunity to be mindful of a wide variety of things, and not just your breath, or how your butt feels from perching on a zafu for uncomfortable lengths of time.

Also, informal mindfulness is done all the time. It never ends. Meanwhile, most people, other than monks and gurus, have little or no time for formal mindfulness. So the sheer amount of informal mindfulness we can engage in, makes it most likely to produce the most benefits from mindfulness.

There are many benefits that derive from a long-term practice of mindfulness. Why hell, it's like Christmas. But as I asserted above, I think the best present you can ever unwrap is the gift of insight.

Insight is an aptly yclept term. Because it reflects exactly what you're doing when you're being mindful. You're turning your sights in, upon your mind. And as you turn your sights in, voila! You get insight!

I don't know quite why it works or how it works. It's FM. Fucking Magic. I have my theories. Numerous theories, in fact. But I'm not sure if any of them are valid. I just know that every-minute, informal mindfulness has a way of producing very profound insights.

Insights are unique ideas, thoughts, revelations, inspirations, and cogitations, that often manifest straight out of the blue. You'll be minding your own business, with your mindfulness turned on, say, halfway, while working, playing, or doing whatever. And then suddenly, something profound will occur to you.

A light bulb will switch on inside your head. An intriguing idea or thought will stop you in mid-track. A eureka moment, an epiphany, a sudden enlightenment, will stun you as powerfully as a 50,000 volt taser.

These insights cannot be predicted, forced, or prevented. They just occur whenever they decide to occur. So you can't say, "Abracadabra, may I be stricken with a profound insight, right at this very moment!" Well, I guess you CAN say that, but it probably won't work, unless you get lucky.

No, insights just happen. They're like unicorns, suddenly appearing out of nowhere, dashing out of the deep forest of your mind, and prancing around, bedazzling you with their unique splendor.

Each insight presents an opportunity. At the very least, they give you something unique to contemplate. And since happiness comes from uniqueness, you're given some happy thoughts to consider.

But often, they also allow for action. For instance, if you get the unique idea for a home improvement, you can then grab your hammer and saw and start working at it. Or a unique solution may occur to you, for solving a problem. Putting the solution to action will let you know how helpful the insight is.

And to be clear, not all insights are helpful. Some are just fanciful will-o'-the-wisps of no practical value. And sometimes you have to put them into action to figure that out. But many are surprisingly helpful.

Helpful or not, you must put an insight into action in order to determine its value. And this is how you develop wisdom. Wisdom comes from experience. The wisest practitioners of meditation are those who've ridden a lot of unicorns.

Thus, mindfulness leads to insight, and insight leads to wisdom. This is the path of mystics, that leads to enlightenment. And it's the path toward the greatest happiness possible. Because it's the most effective way to catch unicorns, and have unique experiences.

Now, you may want to point out to me that insight happens to everyone, and not just to those who practice mindfulness. It's true, and I agree. Everybody gets a profound insight, now and then. And I think that's because everybody practices mindfulness to at least a rudimentary, subconscious, and unintentional degree. I believe mindfulness is a natural function of our minds.

But when you make it a point to be mindful, you'll become much more mindful than the average person. And then insights will occur to you much more often.

Look at mindfulness the same as your own scrawny muscles. If you start working out, those muscles will grow. And before you know it, you'll no longer struggle with lifting things like lint and feathers. In fact, you'll be able to handle much larger loads, such as bricks, boulders, and bags of Portland cement.

In the same way, if you persistently practice informal, every-minute mindfulness, your mind will begin to produce more and more insights. You'll become like a muscle man on the beach, with a much stronger mind than the average person. And you'll have more insights, more wisdom,

more enlightenment, and more happiness, than you've ever possessed before.

OTHER BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

I suppose I should also mention some of the other benefits of mindfulness, just for the record. But keep in mind, they don't hold a candle to insight. Insight is the most fundamental and powerful spinoff from the workings of our minds. Everything else is just gravy, or frosting on the cake. Which, by the way, should never be eaten together. Gravy and frosting don't mix well.

Mindfulness has been touted as a magic bullet for a number of ills. It's like a Swiss Army knife, or a Jack-of-all trades. For example, psychiatrists have used it to treat depression, stress, and anxiety.

Research suggests that mindfulness boosts the immune system, reduces inflammation, and lowers the risk of developing dementia.

A mindful mind is less prone to feel desperate in dire situations. Mindfulness can help you sleep better, and prevent sleep deprivation. And if it really does boost your immune system, then it's good for your health. It's also touted to reduce blood pressure.

And I'm sure if you're a golfer, mindfulness can help rid you of the yips, so you can sink that putt. If you're a poker player, mindfulness can help you detect and stop your own tells, while noticing the tells of others. I'll go all in, and assert it's possible to get rich that way. But I've never tried it, so don't quote me.

Mindfulness has also been used to effectively treat substance abuse. And in prisons, schools, and other institutions, mindfulness has been used in programs that help develop empathy. Thus, a mindful person is more likely to become a trustworthy person, since having empathy is a powerful way to win the trust of others.

THE FOUNT OF LIFE

Mindfulness observes and keeps tabs on the Source of all things. The mind. Everything comes from Mind. Mind is the All. It is the raw material of the universe. It contains more within it than you'll ever find anywhere else, including the average house of a hoarder.

The mind is a tireless force. It never quits. It's like every employer's dream. It's always at work, 24/7.

The mind is the very Source and fount of life. That's because life is change, and the mind is constantly changing, thus creating new life. Just

look at your own mind and you'll be impressed, and possibly aggravated, with how it changes all the time. Your mind is always busy, constructing new thoughts, new concepts, and new perceptions.

This is why it's impossible to stop your mind from thinking, while meditating. Your mind is life. It's no more possible to stop your mind from thinking, than it is to stop life itself. Or at least, the eternal kind of life.

And in my opinion, that's a good thing. I like life.

When we observe our own minds we are observing all the new constructs that it's constantly inventing. Those new constructs tend to disappear when we apply a strong enough focus on them. But then they are immediately replaced by newer constructs. You can't stop the mind from constructing. Not even the most powerful meditation can stop this.

Now I'll admit that it's possible to achieve a sense that the mind has gone blank, when you apply a strong dose of mindfulness to it. But then, how do you know your mind has actually gone blank? You can only know because your tricky, wriggly mind, has squirmed out of your control and constructed the concept of blankness, for you to perceive.

And then, as you congratulate yourself for all this blankness, your ever-inventive mind elevates your self-image to that of a champion meditator. Thus, more constructs. So you see, you can't stop your mind from constructing new things.

The best you can do is to watch your mind as it constantly goes about its business. Watch those constructs rise, and then watch them get demolished, over and over, under the scrutiny of your mind's eye. But that's good enough, because the very act of watching your mind somehow stimulates it, so that it begins to produce more and more unique insights. Unicorns are born, for your enjoyment and practical use.

Watching your mind takes you to the Source of life. This Source is magical, and it loves being watched. And it will richly reward you for all of the attention you pay to it. You will receive many unique insights, and an opportunity to develop wisdom and enlightenment, simply by putting the insights into action.

And this will make you truly, genuinely, and increasingly happy.

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GLOSSARY

(List of Terms & Theories)

The following is a list and description of terms and theories found within this book, with a reference to the chapter where they first occur:

AUTO-ENJOYMENT THEORY: Life is automatically enjoyed. Whenever your mind experiences change (life), you automatically enjoy that change. Chapter 2.

CHINESE FOOD THEORY: An individual sensation arising in your body has a low level of uniqueness. But there are so many sensations arising at any given time, that in quantity they have a high level of uniqueness. This makes the sensations enjoyable, even when they form no discernible unique patterns. Chapter 4.

DOMINATRIX THEORY: Focus is a phenomenon of your mind that causes you to feel either pleasure or pain. Chapter 3.

FAT TORTURE THEORY: Pain is inevitable, just as assuredly as a fat person will one day step on your toe. Chapter 4.

FORMAL MINDFULNESS: Commonly known as meditation. It's the kind of meditation where all you are doing is meditating. It's a singular task. There's no multitasking involved. Chapter 7.

INFORMAL MINDFULNESS: Watching your mind while going about the everyday activities of life. Chapter 7.

INSIGHT: Unique ideas, thoughts, revelations, inspirations, and cogitations, that often manifest straight out of the blue. Chapter 7.

MIND: Any and all minds, including yours, mine, and that of all other living creatures. The creator and keeper of the universe. Chapter 7.

MINDFULNESS: A passionless, detached, objective observation of your own mind, by a piece of your own mind. Chapter 7.

MOTION PICTURE THEORY: Awareness moves so quickly from one sensory input to another, that it provides you with the illusion of being aware of many things at once. And it seems as if these things are constantly changing. Thus you experience the illusion of a continuous flow of the present moment, within an environment consisting of multiple stimuli that seem to be affecting you all at once. Chapter 3.

PRACTICAL JOKE THEORY: The more focused your awareness is, the less background awareness you have. And therefore the easier it is for some lout you're barely aware of in your background, to pull a practical joke on you. Chapter 3.

REAL ESTATE THEORY: You have a limited amount of awareness, which you cannot increase or decrease. Focus can shift your awareness around, but it doesn't change the amount of awareness you have. And the more awareness you place in the foreground, through focus, the less awareness will be available in the background. Chapter 3.

UNICORN THEORY: A theory stating that unique experiences can be as elusive and rare as spotting a unicorn. Chapter 5.

UNICORN: A one-horned, mythical beast that this book uses for symbolizing unique experiences. Chapter 5.

UNICORNIKS: The act of putting Unikonic theories into practice, for the pursuit of unique experiences and improved happiness. This is the chasing of unicorns, as discussed in Chapter 6, and the informal and formal practices of mindfulness, as discussed in Chapter 7 of this book. Chapter 7.

UNIKONICS: Theories about how the mind works, to produce uniqueness and happiness, presented in Chapters 2 through 4 of this book. Chapter 7.

VIRGIN INVESTMENT THEORY: The uniqueness that you naturally experience, without focus, is as precious as a young virgin. Do not sacrifice it without making sure you get something really good in return. Be a wise investor by buying low and selling high. Ideally, try to invest small amounts of your natural uniqueness, through lightly-applied focus, while receiving large amounts of produced uniqueness in return. Chapter 4.

ZOMBIE THEORY: Life is change. Therefore even dead bodies are alive, because they are constantly changing through the process of decomposition. Chapter 2.

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