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Introduction

THIS BOOK IS NOT about happiness—it is about Deep Happy. It is not really about positive thinking, getting what we want, or abundance, though with Deep Happy you will access all of these and, more importantly, the places where you resist them. Deep Happy is about dropping beneath the fray to a place within each of us that is already very much alive and well. Deep Happy is nothing we have to buy or get. We already have it! We just have to remember where it is, make friends with it, and invite it out to play.

Our “quick-fix” culture is used to popping a pill or an attitude against anything that is at all uncomfortable. We are unaccustomed to finding comfort in the parts of us that we have learned to push away, usually since our days in the womb. Culturally, we are an iconic *mélange* of neon and free offers pulling us every which way except for the way home—to ourselves.

We have reduced our understanding of enlightenment to something that describes perfume and political commentary, missing the deeper transcendent meaning: the union with and the acceptance of all that is—first the light *and the dark* and then the infinite held in simple awareness.

In my sixty-plus years of trying to understand myself and other people, I have found that we all mostly want the same things, though the words might be different for each of us. We want to feel safe; we want an easy connection to life; we want vitality, energy, a healthy body and something meaningful and interesting to do with our time. The process of Deep Happy connects us to all of that, because these things are intrinsic to each of us and are in fact necessary for our fulfillment as evolving beings.

Vitality comes as we free the physical body, first from our patterns of trauma and emotional hurt, and then from the limits we have imposed on our senses of feeling and pleasure. *Energy* comes as we free our emotional and energetic hearts, allowing and opening our interactions with life in all its myriad forms. *Intelligence* and real wisdom come as the coherence of our bodies and hearts create a healed foundation for seeing things as they really are, from the finite to the infinite. And finally, real safety comes as we directly experience our timeless essence, untouched by the vagaries of life, death, and the calamities in between. This is the path of Deep Happy.

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Beginning Deep Happy

When a fool hears the Tao, he laughs . . . the utter simplicity!

—Dao De Jing

Happiness is your nature, It is not wrong to desire it
What's wrong is seeking it outside,
When it is inside.

—Ramana Maharshi

JUST LIKE THE GREAT seas and oceans that are unaffected by huge and raging storms on the surface just a few feet above, we can experience the ebb and flow of conflicting and difficult events of the world outside of us, yet still connect to the stillness, peace, and happiness in the deep and essential parts of us. In other words, once you get used to it, you can exist in the crazy world and still remain calm, connected, and aware inside. This is the essential message of Deep Happy.

Everyone wants to be happy. It's what drives the good and the craziness of the world. The quest for happiness is the basis in some way for everything we do. All forms of

life want to be happy, even the tiniest of us. I remember in high school looking at amoebas under a microscope. I put a very tiny particle of meat on the slide. All the amoebas rushed to get to it, like a big pre-holiday sale at Macy's. It was very clear that the particular amoeba that got the protein experienced something quite different than the other amoebas. The one who got it seemed happy, if you can say that about an amoeba. Its body expanded, while the others seemed frustrated, their little bodies contracting and bumping into each other as they moved away. Their patterns and movements were very different than they were before they went after and lost the food. All forms of life, even microscopic organisms, experience transient happiness—if not on the emotional level, then at least on the chemical, neuronal, and survival level. As potentially conscious beings, we have the opportunity to experience the place inside of us that is safe and connected: that is Deep Happy.

It might seem easy to be happy, but happiness can be elusive and paradoxical. Reading, driving a car, and even walking seem easy, but we had to learn how to do them by letting their processes become imprinted into our nervous systems and daily patterns. If we want to excel, we can take advanced training to read faster, drive better, and walk and exercise more efficiently. Learning to experience Deep Happy is very similar.

You might be wondering, “Why do I need to learn to be happy? Shouldn't I just fix my problems? Wouldn't that make me happy?” That's a fair question, but you are reading this book, I assume, for a reason. Either you haven't been

able to fix your problems or think you have already done so and you still feel like something is missing.

The odd thing is, it often happens that at just the moment when we finally feel happy—when we get our new car, find the tax documents we have been looking for all day, or even just get a moment of peace—something else comes up and takes a bite out of our happiness. This kind of happiness, although certainly welcome whenever it comes, is transient. It is a kind of happiness that depends on something happening or not happening. It is not a happiness that we can count on; most of the time, we can't even predict what will bring it or how long it will last.

So let's re-examine what happiness really is. On a superficial level we can say it is a generalized experience of feeling and sensations caused by many things that we usually lump together: satisfaction, resolution, safety, and reward. We eat a good meal when we are hungry; buy a new espresso maker when our old one breaks; feel the morning sun after a cold night; appreciate a good listener; win an argument; fall in love; end a bad relationship; start and finish a great book. This list could go on to fill a whole library. All of these things and probably most that you can imagine involve some kind of change—some thing or situation becoming better.

Much of our time involves seeking or refuting something to attain happiness. This is a never-ending process. As we grow and develop, it becomes more and more subtle. For instance, feeling good about ourselves because we didn't want or need something seems more developed than succumbing to the desire, but it is still part of the process of cause and effect. We remain in this mode until we come upon another

way. For most of us, ending the cycle of “searching and getting” usually means we have left our bodies.

The deeper happiness inside of us is a happiness that does not change. It has a different quality than the outer experiences of satisfaction and safety. It is like a wonderful tone that vibrates subtly and pervasively throughout our bodies and within each cell, thought, and perception. As outer challenges and problems absorb our attention, a part of us always remains unchanged. Our core essence is always in resonance with a deep and profound happiness. We just have to remember that it is there waiting for us.

Most of us have had at least some happiness in our lives. For many people these momentary peaks of happiness are what hold us together through the tedium and routine of everyday life. But I ask you: What happens to the experience of being happy all the rest of the time? It may surprise you to know that many of us resist deeper happiness without knowing it. We get very used to being and staying just the way we are, often with great limits to our ability to feel pleasure, ease, joy, and especially personal satisfaction and even simple fun. These limitations are learned restrictions that either match with the patterns and tone of our birth families or are the result of overwhelming physical or emotional trauma, which then anchor themselves in the structures of our physical and energetic body. These blockages can stay with us until we find a way to heal and release them. As you read this book, you will be able to uncover and heal these blockages.

Deep Happy Inner Practice

Take a few moments to relax and close your eyes. Breathe into your lower abdomen and feel your breath move in and out. Let yourself relax into your body. Listen to and feel your breath expanding and relaxing in your lower tummy.

Let yourself remember feeling happy. Let the memory of that feeling awaken in your body. Can you let your body feel happy? Notice if there are any parts of your body that feel less happy than other parts, or that don't feel anything at all. Your pelvis, neck, shoulders, and chest are common areas of emotional holding. Try to let the physical feeling of happiness gently flow into these uncharted waters. See if over time you can let every cell in your body vibrate with the tone of deep connectedness and Deep Happy.

Think about things that make you happy. When that seems clear, remember times when you felt deeply happy.

Remember how your body felt during these times. If that is not easy for you to do, feel your breath in your lower abdomen again while at the same time remembering your happy moments. Happiness is first and foremost a body experience.

To get to Deep Happy we first have to reacquaint our bodies with the physical experience of pleasant sensations, then physical happiness. No hurry—just let yourself get used to it over time.

We grew up believing that certain basic attitudes and ways of being create inner happiness: kindness, stillness, generosity, forgiveness, and being in the *now*. We are encouraged to be peaceful, still, and calm. However, when

we do drop into that moment of quiet and clarity, what often arises is everything inside us that is not quiet and not clear: our worries, fears, memories, feelings, withheld expressions, and doubts. These inner voices can have a wide polarity. Part of Deep Happy is learning what to do when we notice this happening. On the good side, they can range from easy thoughts that creatively inform and remind us of things we need to notice, remember, or think about. But they can also manifest as physical and emotional numbness or raging storms of confusion and intense feelings that can overtake us, eventually filling all available space with inner noise and powerful diverting images. Most of us live somewhere in between, though the voices of guidance and wisdom are always there—even when they are hard to hear.

We learn from our families and society to “protect” ourselves with these internal thoughts and voices so that we stay away from the feelings and emotions that are locked away deep in our bodies. To do this we either make ourselves numb or we use the excessive stimulation of all the “things” of the world. Though we unconsciously put them there to protect us, in reality they keep us from ourselves. This is the great confusion of our current world. The setup is this:

We have our natural inner clarity and guidance. It gets covered up by confused thoughts, conflicting emotions, and uncomfortable physical sensations. On top of that we surround ourselves with the frenzy of our busy lives or the dullness of being stuck without knowing what we really want. When we can begin to turn our attention back in and finally notice the comfortable place inside of us, we can release the “goop” and find our way to a life that gets easier—much easier.

Our world supports the drama of our continuing misery with all the diversions we could ever need, all the enabling mythology and for many of us a political, economic and social milieu that holds us in a perpetual state of unease and concern and clouds over the many positive things that are also occurring. Many of us are able to deal with the intensity of modern life by finding some quiet time now and then. This is a good thing—it is the only way that we can calm our overtaxed nervous systems. But sometimes the apparent experience of stillness and inner reflection can in reality be dullness, numbness, and disconnection masquerading as peace and calm. Closing off from the craziness of the world is a healthy tack in the short term. But to emerge from the craziness whole and clear with our wits about us takes a different strategy. We may not initially be able to remove ourselves from our daily challenges, but we can learn to listen to ourselves again, even in the midst of the fray, and in so doing, reawaken the real peaceful and happy place that is always within us. With a little practice, this sacred place can be a reliable source we can find our way back to again and again, until we finally get it that we never have to leave.

To accomplish this we must begin by discovering who we really are and living in the world as it really is. The merging of these creates a synergy that is both pragmatic and creative; it eliminates the effects of most of the things that trouble us.

One of the important stages in developing this personal coherence comes as we unite the voices inside of us. We have all experienced “I should, I shouldn’t” conversations with ourselves. We have all done or said one thing while thinking

or feeling something quite different. These mixed voices can counterbalance the effect of our initial good actions and overshadow or shift the wisdom, energy, and tone of our original good idea. These shifts in outcome can also come from trying to do the “right thing” or listening to our head without taking the time to sense the deeper wisdom of what our heart is telling us. A famous story from Nepal illustrates this very well.

In the 1970s, a U.S. Peace Corps worker in Nepal decided that the several-thousand-year-old tradition of terracing the hillside rice fields so that they slanted downward could be improved upon. He figured that slanting the fields inward toward the hills could conserve water. His Peace Corps team spent a huge amount of time and energy restructuring all the ancient rice fields, encouraging the local villagers to restructure their way of doing things that had worked for thousands of years. It seemed to work at first, but as the first rainy season wore on, the water that had pooled up in the area where the field met the hill began to seep underground. Eventually the ground underneath the fields eroded. All the rich earth that had been developed for centuries slid down the hill, ruining the local economy and leaving many previously prosperous villages without food or livelihood.

Obviously, the Peace Corps worker had a good intent. But his desire to “do good” and his lack of appreciation for the knowledge and practical experience of the Nepalese farmers kept him from seeing that he was making a bad decision. These patterns of personality that cause us to act and react are often very hard for us to see in ourselves. They have probably been with us since the womb, and are what

hold us so firmly because we are so used to them. They are primarily patterns in the body and nervous system, but they are also the accumulation of certain conceptual ideas that we hold as sacrosanct. We call the accumulation of these influences our outer personality. The good news is that we can change.

I do much of my work over the phone with people from all over the world. I was working with a physician and acupuncturist in Chicago who was questioning why her practice was not growing as she wanted it to. I had her take a moment and imagine her practice becoming very busy, with many new and interesting clients. As she did this, her voice tightened a little and I could tell that a part of her was resisting the idea. As with many of us, her head wanted one thing, but the rest of her perceived the idea of more clients and greater success in a different way.

My client's professional training had taught her that to be a good physician one has to be very serious and professional. She did not allow flowing energy and physical renewal to be part of her personal experience while performing her clinical duties. The more clients she worked with, the more worn out and resistant she became.

My client had not learned to nourish herself while working. She expended energy, but she was not used to taking it in at the same time. She failed to create a reciprocal loop—A process of putting out energy through action and intent and simultaneously allowing energy to flow back. Again, this is a common cause of burnout and work dissatisfaction.

I worked to help her shift both her energetic patterns and her learned concepts about what success looks like. I

showed her how to reprogram her physical patterns of subtly tightening various parts of her body, so that by the end of the session when she pictured herself with more clients, her physical and energetic body opened and she felt a deep ease and happiness. Pretty much everyone has patterns like my client's, and they are easy to change. It just takes a little bit of time, study, openness, and honest curiosity.

Deep Happy Inner Practice

Think back to a situation when you went against what your inner voice was telling you.

Perhaps afterward, it was obvious that things might have turned out differently if you had trusted what you knew to be true. This gap between our wisdom and our actions is the focus of this practice.

Start by just beginning to notice what you really feel or think about things and events going on around you. Pick an area that is not going as you would like it to.

Pay attention to your secondary thoughts and feelings. If you are trying to do something, notice if there are any other voices or opinions in your head. At first just notice and listen. When you have an extra moment, see if you can complete each of the other thoughts: "This is not a good idea because . . ." or "I don't deserve this because . . ." and so forth. You might be surprised at what comes out. Also notice the sound and tone of each of your dissenting voices. They often sound remarkably similar to one of our inner parents or the voice of our parents.

One of the basic truths that Buddha taught is that “life is suffering.” This might sound a little pessimistic for a cool guy like the Buddha. But what I think he meant was that life is suffering only if we live and find our meaning in the outer world of cause and effect, ebb and flow—a life where we only pay attention to material things and don’t discover the deeper unchanging reality that dissolves suffering. This inner connection is the source of the solutions that our world so desperately needs.

Buddha taught that all suffering comes from only three sources: desire, aversion, and ignorance. In other words, wanting something we don’t have; not wanting something we already have or are afraid we will get; or misperceiving or ignoring what is right in front of us. In other words, suffering is caused by feeling that we cannot be happy unless the reality around us meets our expectations.

Here is something to think about:

All of the things you can think of that make you happy are relative! All of the things that *make* us happy tend to change. When they change, so can the possibility of our happiness.

Deep Happy is just what is left when everything else disappears.

Most of us live in what my wife Conde calls a “Hamster Nation”—we endlessly run through our lives, rarely getting off the wheel of outer experience and activity to touch the intrinsic deeper reality. We are often so busy or “tuned out” that we miss the full experience of living in our miraculous physical body that anchors us to our multifaceted world and to the experience of simply being.

For some, this endless “Hamster Nation” activity can even involve sitting on the couch, closing off from the activities of outer life through dullness and habit. Please don’t get me wrong here. We all have a right to sit on the couch and veg out. I personally love my couch. It is a joy to come home and find my safe place to sit, away from the intensity or boredom of life, and feel like things are okay again, at least for a little while.

A few years ago, after an agonizing divorce, I rented a house on a mountain by the sea just north of San Francisco. I spent my first month there sitting on my couch, staring out at the changing colors of the vast ocean, not even thinking, just being. It was all I could do. This was a conscious choice and a strategy for beginning the process of healing and discovering where to take my life next. But if sitting on the couch (or wherever our “soft place” is) is all that we do every night—pushing the world away rather than to creatively and consciously opening up to it—then we are still running on that hamster wheel. Of course, it can be a very good thing to “find our cave” and hang out there until the storm passes, but when the storm is over we get to go outside again. It can also be an interesting process to bundle up and go for a walk in the storm, enjoying the power and beauty of it.

We all have a right to our own version of the hamster wheel. However, it will not bring us lasting fulfillment or Deep Happy until we begin to accept ourselves as we are and open our senses to the events that engulf us. As we begin to accept, we find a level of living that is not dependent on the transient events of the world. Before long, the fleeting

interest and excitement of the good meal or new shoes will, rather than wearing off, connect us via these wonderful sensory experiences to the intrinsic biological happiness that is within each of us. This is when our constant search for the “unknown something” begins to quiet and our hamster wheel begins to slow down. Please don’t misunderstand me. I love the outer things of the world: shopping, travel, sex, food, even football. But the deepest part of my experience does not depend on any of those things.

Most of us are in the habit of limiting the amount of joy or even basic nourishment and happiness that we can let in. Just the other day I was working with a patient, Ellen, who was not able to hear anything good about herself. She would not accept anything that I said to her that was positive.

“You must have a lot of inner strength to handle the death of your husband the way you did,” I said to her.

“Uh-huh,” she mumbled, staring out the window.

“You really are survivor.”

“Oh yes, I am that,” she answered, responding to the memory of the pain, rather than the accomplishment of keeping it together through her difficult time, which was what I was trying to encourage her with.

How many times have we taken in criticism, detail by judgmental detail, feeling the sharp sting of someone’s recrimination, yet letting kind, loving, and encouraging words fly right by us without the slightest notion that they might actually be true? This is a mild form of post-traumatic stress, though for some of us some it is not so mild. Our bodies and nervous systems learn to minimize stimulus to avoid any kind of overwhelm.

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While I was writing this book, I got a call from a woman named Melissa. She was reorganizing her life after separating from her husband upon finding out that he and her best friend had been having an affair for over a year. Her previous life training had taught her to push her feelings and body sensations away. In our phone session, we worked to have her begin to feel the intense

feelings of anger and betrayal that she had kept at bay by keeping parts of her body numb. She told me that she initially felt very uncomfortable as the previously denied feelings came up, but as they passed she began to feel coherent in a way that was new to her and let her feel stronger and more hopeful than she had in many years.

I often use the analogy of a dry sponge in my classes and seminars. Dry sponges do not easily absorb moisture. It takes them a little time to get used to the water; then they gradually begin to take it in. Many of us are like that. We have our set points for nourishment, love, attention, and intimacy. Whenever our comfortable limit is breached, our physical and emotional defenses begin to tighten up.

My family had almost no physical closeness. In my early twenties I lived in a spiritual community where everyone did a lot of hugging. For the first six months, when someone hugged me, I felt stiff and uncomfortable. Hugging made me nervous

because I was not used to it. In time I learned to like it. For many of us, love, caring, self-acceptance, and nurturing take getting used to. The practice of opening our selves involves first noticing our discomfort, then watching it, and gradually, as we are ready, relaxing into whatever the fuller experience is.

We all have likes and dislikes, but if they become too important, they get in our way. The soup is too salty, my knee is painful, I do not have enough time to get everything done, my co-worker will not stop talking about herself, and so forth. It is not that there isn't some validity to each of these, but if we get too invested in any of them, our energy and balance get sucked away and our fuse gets shorter. Each of these situations involves something that requires change. It is certainly no problem to either change or not eat the soup or to have a conversation with our fellow employee. But what if it is something we cannot change? What if our painful knee or our schedule cannot be improved? This is where Deep Happy becomes useful.

The third Zen patriarch, a great Chinese sage from 606AD, said, "The great way is not difficult for those that have no preferences . . . to put one thing against the other is a disease of the mind."

This does not mean that we should not like chocolate more than vanilla. We all have preferences. However, when our happiness is fixed on "things" or on specific outcomes that we have a limited ability to change, we become unbalanced.

We always have the ability to change the tone and quality of our experience, to shift how we feel about what is

We always have the ability to change the tone and quality of our experience, to shift how we feel about what is happening.

happening. Anchoring to our inner state to better handle what comes and goes is very much like traveling on a sailboat. When the wind is blowing in the direction that we want to go, it is great. It can be exciting when the wind becomes a gale or a storm, but it may also be dangerous, so we must be watchful. When there is not a puff of wind to be seen anywhere and the sea is still, then we must settle in and wait for it to change. Things are just the way they are; changing or accepting them are the only real solutions.

Buddha taught about the Two Truths—opposite realities that exist simultaneously, one within and around the other. The one truth is that the world is very real. We walk, talk, stand, and interact with it. There are consequences if we don't accept its seemingly solid reality. If we don't eat or if we run out into traffic without looking, the cause and effect realities of this “solid” world become apparent. This was the historically predictable world of Isaac Newton until Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, and other scientists and thinkers cracked open the door with quantum physics; later, string theory blew it off its hinges.

As we examine our seemingly real world, it seems quite as it appears: solid and definable. Yet when we look more closely, we find that its solidity and even its predictability come into great question. This is the other truth. Even the most solid thing—your desk, for instance—is made of wood fibers that are made of molecules, which are made of atoms, which are made of particles, and so forth, smaller and smaller. At some point we have to accept that there is nothing there—just the illusion of something that is really just energy, vast space, and our awareness of it. From this

perspective we can understand that Deep Happy comes from being more present in the smaller outer world without losing the thread of awareness of the big picture.

So now let's think about time. Much of our time is spent thinking about the past or the future—how things were or should have been; and what will or won't happen. Because of this, we often miss our third choice: what's here right now. Since the past is long gone and the future is an uncertainty, spending most of our time here in the present is a useful option. It is where everything is; it is the only place to find Deep Happy.

Each moment contains the essence of everything. Each moment is an entire universe when we let go of time.

Each moment contains the essence of everything. Each moment is an entire universe when we let go of time. The search for a true understanding of reality has permeated all knowledge. One single agreement that has emerged, whether it be from secular or transcendent sources, is that, without the separation and limitations of time and space, that the possibility exists that...we are all connected... To me this means that we are all connected to everything all the time, whether we know it or not. This view is shared by all esoteric spiritual traditions and modern physics.

This bigger connection is something I have explored all my life. When I was a little boy, about eight or nine years old, someone told me about infinity. I could not imagine something that had no beginning and no end. It was a great quandary for me. For months, when I was alone, I would close my eyes and try to feel the place that did not begin or end. I never told anyone about this.

One day, when I closed my eyes, I *got there*. I got to the place that neither began nor ended, and I thought, “Oh, so this is infinity.” It was quite a normal and simple thing, really. At the time I just tucked it away and did not think of it in detail for a long while. It was a gentle moment that changed me the rest of my life, and whenever the word or idea of infinity came up, without realizing it, I would check to see if there was something there for me. Many years later, when I was thirty-seven and doing a long retreat in the Himalayas, the memory of that moment came to me. I realized that the experience had been a bridge—it connected me to what I can only think of as another time and place. That experience of the simplicity of infinite being has been a foundation and guide ever since. Interestingly, as I have told the story in my seminars and classes, I have met quite a few others who had this experience with infinity as children.

The deeper experience of happiness is something most of us have to get used to. It is easy to see a beautiful sunset, smell the fragrance of a flower, taste a wonderful meal, or even experience a sublime “ah-ha” moment, but how much can we allow each of the moments to nourish and change us? Deepening the experience of each moment does not need to take time; just a flash of awareness, even in the midst of doing other things can create a seemingly timeless interlude. Learning to take pleasure and beauty into our marrow is an important part of our journey back to ourselves and to Deep Happy.

I love the sky. Its ever-changing nature, clouds, and shades of color and light have always captivated me. When my son Namkai was a little boy, I used to point to a beautiful sky and say, “Isn’t it beautiful!” He would look up briefly, or

not, and mutter “Uh-huh,” not really moving his attention from his book or video game. Now, at seventeen, he will exclaim, “Dad, look at that,” pointing out a beautiful formation of clouds and taking the beauty into his own being.

Slowing down, even just for a moment, is the only prerequisite for taking pleasure and happiness into ourselves. When we see something beautiful, we can let the feeling of the colors and forms merge into our bodies. The next time you think of it, see if you can experience the colors and shapes as vibrations and sensations that are moving through you, nourishing you, filling you up with something divine.

When you taste something, let the taste expand into your whole body. When you make love, let the sensations of connection and pleasure move through you, opening and healing all the stuck and tight places with the physical sensations and feelings of bliss. Sex and physical pleasure can be very healing. When experiencing any kind of physical pleasure, notice how and where you limit the physical sensations. Over time, notice first the big and then the smaller places that are numb or have any reduced sensitivity anywhere on your body, gradually relaxing and expanding the good feelings. Eventually you will learn to experience all the nuances of pleasure and sensation in your whole body—and the vibrations of the universe with every cell. Even if you are not having physical intimacy, you can get used to letting pleasant sensations of any kind move through your body. If this process is difficult for you, please don’t judge yourself—some things take time. The initial purpose of shutting down was to avoid pain, and your nervous system has to get used to being safe.

Several years ago I was teaching in the small Zendo in the rear of the property at the Providence Zen Center. By Sunday, we had spent several days doing meditation and Qigong practices. We were still and relaxed and in touch with the gentle rhythms and sensations of our bodies. It was spring, and warm. The forest around us was filled with new growth and energy. We could feel in our bodies the sounds of the gentle drops of rain on the pond, the buzzing

Our bodies are as much from the natural world as any mountain, leopard, or river and have much to tell us when we listen.

of insects, and the whooshing of trees in the gentle breeze. When we allow nature to vibrate within us, the rhythms of the natural world can harmonize and soothe us, filling and nourishing our tight and tired places. Our bodies are as much from the natural world as any mountain, leopard, or river and have much to tell us when we listen.

“Okay, I can see that. But what if my body hurts and makes me miserable and prevents me from living my life?”

I have worked with patients for forty years. Most of them were in physical or emotional pain or had some difficulty with their body or mind not doing what they were supposed to do. When someone is in pain, the quality of that pain is always influenced by whatever held-in traumas and emotions are lingering beneath the surface. If someone has held-in anger, what comes out is anger. If they have grief or sadness, what come mixed with the pain are tears (or the struggle to hold the tears). The sensation of pain is physical and does not need to affect our state of being in all but the most extreme circumstances. Even in those most

severe situations, we have the innate ability to drop into a state beyond the sensations of the body and find relief and peace. Even childbirth has the potential to be blissful and even orgasmic with training and preparation.

A great Tibetan Lama, Kusum Lingpa, once personally told me a story that was later confirmed by others who knew him. The Chinese had imprisoned him during Tibet's worst years of political chaos. The prison authorities wanted him to refute Buddhism and his beliefs. Kusum Lingpa had never been one to go quietly, and so had particularly irked the guards. When he refused, they decided to make an example of him.

They took him into a room and held his hand on a steel table. Using a large iron mallet, they smashed his fingers, one by one, each time asking if he would refute his faith. He lasted for three fingers before passing out, but using his meditative training and his strong belief, he was able to control his pain and help the healing of his hand, which was still deformed, but very animated while he told me the story.

This incident infuriated the guards even more. Kusum Lingpa's stubbornness and the quick healing of his hand made them even more determined to subdue his spirit. One moonless night they chained him to a stake that was driven into the frozen ground outside the prison gates. He was dressed only in his thin robes. Winters on the high Tibetan plateau are extremely cold. Temperatures of forty to fifty degrees below zero are not uncommon. With his leg chained to the stake, he was able to sit in meditation. The next morning when the guards found him, he was smiling, sitting in a ring of melted snow. He had used the Tibetan

yogic techniques of “Tu Mo” to generate heat and a blissful meditation.

After that the guards left him alone. They seemed to realize that some of the Lamas had something more than belief; they had training and understanding in areas that transcended the normal and allowed them to connect to something unshakable. Even in those terrible and inhumane conditions, the abilities of the Tibetan Lamas influenced and transformed the attitudes of many of the guards.

These meditative and yogic practices are real and powerful. They have literally saved my life on several occasions, although nothing like being tortured in the frozen mountains of Tibet.

I have seen the simple process of inner meditative awareness change lives and even cure diseases as severe as cancer. On a simple level, just a few breaths into the lower abdomen can change our brain chemistry (as much as 85 percent of the body’s serotonin is made in the gut). Working with deeply entrenched patterns and end-stage disease takes a great deal more time, training, and commitment, but is basically no more difficult.

In this chapter we have begun to lift the veil of who we are and some of the dynamics that keep us from being and expressing ourselves and that overshadow the part of us that is continually Deep Happy.