

A stack of four smooth, dark grey stones is positioned on the left side of the cover. The stones are stacked vertically, with the top one being the smallest and the bottom one being the largest. The background is a solid, vibrant blue. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the cover, partially overlapping a faint, light blue circular graphic.

Nine Principles for Conscious Living

BY Bill Harris

Nine Principles for Conscious Living

Bill Harris, Founder/CEO
Centerpointe Research Institute

Table of Contents

Preface

Introduction

Overview

Brief Summary of the Nine Principles for Conscious Living

The Nine Principles for Conscious Living

- Principle #1 Let Whatever Happens Be Okay
- Principle #2 Threshold
- Principle #3 Chaos and Reorganization
- Principle #4 The Map is Not the Territory
- Principle #5 Responsibility as Empowerment
- Principle #6 Conscious Change
- Principle #7 Witnessing
- Principle #8 Good and Bad Generalizations
- Principle #9 The Neutral Universe

Conclusion/Resources

Preface

One of my duties in the early days of Centerpointe Research Institute, was to lead retreats on personal development. (I led two retreats per year, every year, for more than 20 years). At these retreats we created an environment where people became very intimate and very trusting in just a few days. People felt such safety that they share their deepest fears, problems, concerns and traumas.

In return, they were supported, nurtured and cared about, as they work through as much healing and personal change as they were ready to deal with.

Though we no longer hold these retreats, I realized that I had been teaching a series of powerful principles that, if mastered, can totally change a person's life. I want to share them with you.

Every presenting problem we deal with, whether mental, emotional, or spiritual, can be traced back to a violation of one or more of these principles. If a person follows these principles, life goes along pretty nicely, with a lot of happiness, inner peace, and personal power. These principles overlap, but that's okay. They are different facets of the same diamond.

I know they will be helpful to you, as they have been to many thousands of people all over the world.

Be well,

Bill

~Bill Harris

Founder/CEO

Centerpointe Research Institute
1600 NW 167th Place, Beaverton, OR 97006

www.centerpointe.com

bill@centerpointe.com

Introduction

The Nine Principles of Conscious Living are one of those easy/hard things in life—easy once you master them, seemingly impossible before you “get” them. But if you can live your life by these principles, everything flows, suffering is minimal, and what seemed to be problems melt away. Each of these principles looks at a different facet of the same diamond—the diamond of expanded awareness and conscious, happy, living.

The reason some of these principles seem hard to master is that a part of us fears that following them will actually make things worse. This is, once again, because our internal map of reality is created to help us be safe in our family while growing up. Even though we may be grown and away from our family, changing it seems unsafe—at least to the unconscious mind.

So be forewarned that you might have some resistance to mastering some of these principles. Also take note that the more resistance you feel, the greater the potential benefit, since the resistance is a sign that the principle in question is a real issue for you.

Also, cut yourself some slack as you embark on mastering these principles. Though they can be mastered in the twinkling of an eye, in real life they generally take some time. You will find yourself slipping up over and over. Let that be okay.

You’ll go through several stages with each principle:

Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence

You don’t follow the principle and don’t even know you’re not following it.

Stage 2: Conscious Incompetence

You aren’t following the principle, but you are conscious of that fact.

Stage 3: Conscious Competence

You can follow it, but only while you are paying attention to it and consciously making yourself follow it.

Stage Four: Unconscious Competence

You have consciously followed the principle so consistently that you now can follow it without thinking about it.

You will learn to watch your feelings, thoughts and behaviors with curiosity and awareness. Resistance - and its incumbent suffering - will fall away. You will find you have more choice about how you feel and behave, which people and situations you attract or become attracted to, and whether you assign resourceful or non-resourceful meanings to the events in your life.

As you learn and practice these powerful principles in your life, a whole new world opens up for you!

Brief Summary of the Principles for Conscious Living

Principle #1: The Principle of Letting Whatever Happens Be Okay

The amount a person suffers is directly related to how much they resist the fact that “things are the way they are.” All suffering and discomfort, regardless of the appearance, is a result of some form of resistance. This means that ending resistance ends suffering.

To the degree a person is willing and able to let whatever happens be okay, they do not suffer. Attachments to people, situations, or things being different than they are can be upgraded to preferences, so when “what is” is not what you want, you do not suffer. When this happens, your happiness and peace are not controlled by outer circumstances.

People with many rules about how things are suppose to be suffer more, because no matter how much they try to get the world to follow their rules, the rules are often violated.

Letting whatever happens be okay does not mean you can’t work toward making things they way you want them to be; it just means you *prefer* the outcomes you seek rather than being addicted to them.

The key, then, to handling challenging situations, thoughts, and feelings is not in resisting them, but rather in becoming as fully accepting of them as possible. Accept what happens, and what you think and feel, even if it is uncomfortable. *Though it looks as if discomfort is created by what we resist, in actual fact, discomfort comes from the resistance itself.*

Through acceptance, you empower yourself to heal.

Stop resisting, and the discomfort stops also. Through acceptance, you empower yourself to heal, transform, or release unresolved mental or emotional material. When you sense resistance, meet it with acceptance.

Ironically, once you stop resisting, you are much more effective in creating any external change you may have a preference (not an attachment) for.

Principle #2: The Principle of Threshold

Every person has a personal threshold for what they can handle from their environment, based on the structure of their own personal map of reality—their concept of who they are and how they relate to the rest of the universe. When your map of reality cannot handle its environment, you become stressed.

You then try to deal with that stress through various coping mechanisms learned during childhood. These include anger, depression, anxiety, fear, substance abuse, overeating, plus others considered more “healthy,” such as exercising, talking with friends, isolation, and many others.

All dysfunctional feelings and behaviors are really coping mechanisms.

All dysfunctional feelings and behaviors are really coping mechanisms used in an attempt to deal with the stress of being over this threshold. Therefore, the “cure” for such feelings and behaviors is to increase that threshold (precisely what meditation, and particularly meditation with Centerpointe’s Holosync® audio technology, does).

Dysfunctional feelings and behaviors are not caused by other people, or by external circumstances, regardless of how it seems, and people with a high threshold remain happy, peaceful, and centered regardless of what happens around them.

When people suffer trauma during childhood, their threshold does not mature normally. Such people reach adulthood with a lower threshold and are much more easily pushed past it—and are therefore caught in dysfunctional feelings and behaviors much more often.

Raising this threshold through therapeutic or spiritual practices causes dysfunctional feelings and behaviors to gradually disappear, because the threshold eventually becomes so high that it becomes difficult for anything to push a person beyond it.

Principle #3: The Principle of Chaos and Reorganization

Chaos always precedes growth, and is a part of the process of change. Therefore, chaos is a *good* thing.

The coping mechanisms mentioned above (i.e., dysfunctional feelings and behaviors) are really attempts to hold one's internal map of reality together. This happens because we associate the old map with safety. Changing it, on an unconscious level, does not feel safe.

The process of a map of reality reorganizing at a higher level in response to stimuli that exceeds its threshold is a very natural one. As the old map of reality is stimulated in a way that exceeds its threshold, it goes into temporary internal chaos.

The chaos you're experiencing is a prelude to positive change.

Eventually, the old map may fall apart if the chaos becomes so great that the old map cannot hold itself together. Then, almost simultaneously, the map reorganizes itself at a higher, more complex level of functioning—one that *can* handle the environment it previously could not handle.

This natural process always results in a new and better map that *can* handle what the old map could not. It is therefore helpful to recognize when you are in the initial chaos state, and to remind yourself that the chaos you are experiencing is the prelude to positive change—if you know how to get out of the way and let it happen.

Principle #4: The Map is Not the Territory

There is a tendency to try to protect the old map (your concept of who you are and how you relate to the rest of the universe) as it goes into this initial chaos stage of growth. This attempt to hold the old map together comes from the mistaken idea that we *are* the map—that “the map is the territory”—rather than realizing that it is just a convenient tool we use to navigate through life.

It is the limitation of this map (its inability to adequately “map the territory” or otherwise represent whatever is going on in the environment) that creates the “over-threshold” experience and the resulting dysfunctional feelings and behaviors. Therefore, letting the map go through the evolutionary process of temporary chaos followed by reorganization at a higher level, results in relief from the problems and limitations of the old map, and a new ability to deal with what was previously stressful or overwhelming.

When your map begins to fall apart, remember that *you* are not falling apart.

When your map begins to fall apart, remember that *you* are not falling apart. You are merely trading an ineffective tool for a better one. Learn to recognize your favorite methods of holding on to the old map, and learn to stand aside and watch these times of chaos with the knowledge that something new and better is being created.

Principle #5: The Principle of Responsibility as Empowerment

You are responsible for every feeling or behavior you have, in the sense that it is either your conscious choice, or it is an *automatic* response generated unconsciously by your internal map of reality.

This is not to say that you are *to blame* for every feeling or behavior you have. Taking personal responsibility is not about blame, but rather about personal power. If someone or something outside of you is the cause of your feelings or behavior, you are powerless—a victim.

Taking personal responsibility is not about blame, but rather about personal power.

If you—or at least your unconscious processes—are the cause, then you can exercise some choice in creating the feelings and behaviors that you choose, and that serve you. People or events may be a stimulus, but your response comes from you, either consciously or unconsciously.

Principle #6: The Principle of Conscious Change

It is impossible to create something that does not serve you, *and at the same time create it consciously*. You can, however, create dysfunctional feelings, behaviors, and outcomes over and over as long as you create them *unconsciously* (without continuous conscious awareness). If you observe the creation of feelings, behaviors, or outcomes *with conscious awareness*, those that do not serve you will fall away.

Learn to watch your feelings, thoughts and behaviors with curiosity and awareness.

The trick is to remain conscious. Unfortunately, we have many ways of becoming unconscious: overeating, drugs and alcohol, projection, blaming, thinking, analyzing, obsessing, spacing out—and countless others.

To become conscious, you must identify your favorite ways of going unconscious, be vigilant in noticing them, and instead of going unconscious, learn to *watch your feelings, thoughts and behaviors with curiosity and awareness*.

Meditation (especially with Centerpointe’s Holosync audio technology) increases the ability to remain conscious and to be a curious observer of whatever is happening. As you develop this ability, non-resourceful feelings, behaviors, and approaches to life automatically fall away, and are replaced by those that bring happiness, peace, and success to one’s life.

Principle #7: The Principle of Witnessing

When faced with uncomfortable feelings (the result, either consciously or unconsciously, of not letting “what is” be okay), the best course of action is to mentally step aside and, *with great curiosity*, watch yourself have the feeling or behavior. You might say to yourself: “There I am, doing ___” or “There I am feeling _____. How interesting!”

The act of stepping aside to watch helps create conscious awareness, because it keeps you from becoming lost in the feelings or behaviors, or your mental analysis of them. It makes it much more difficult to continue suffering. This watching needs to be done, however, without attachment to the outcome. In other words, you must objectively and curiously watch what is happening—not to change anything, but just to notice what is happening. The ability to step aside and watch yourself as you feel and act is an acquired skill that takes time and practice to develop, but it will totally change your life. Meditation naturally develops your ability to become the witness.

...watching needs to be done...without attachment to the outcome.

Principle #8: The Principle of Good and Bad Generalizations

Based on our early life interactions with our primary caregivers, we all develop generalizations about who we are and what our relationship is to the rest of the world. These generalizations (part of our “map” of reality) divide different aspects of ourselves and the world into two categories: “good” or acceptable, and “bad” or unacceptable.

To keep from experiencing shame or other uncomfortable feelings regarding the “bad” things, we either 1) repress them into our unconscious mind, or 2) project them onto others (creating extreme emotional reactions to others who exhibit characteristics we believe are “bad” or unacceptable in ourselves). Both of these reactions are examples of ways we become unconscious.

There is nothing about any of us that is innately bad.

In many ways, emotional healing involves “unlearning” these old generalizations and making new, healthier ones. In reality, there is nothing about any of us that is innately bad.

These generalizations seem so real to us that the idea that they are *not* true may seem ridiculous. All generalizations, however, are creations of the mind, and they are not innate in the people or things we apply them to.

Principle #9: The Principle of the Neutral Universe

Everything in the universe is neutral. The old saying (Shakespeare), “Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so” is true. We assign meaning to everything we come in contact with. This assigning of meaning then becomes part of our map of reality. Because we assign these meanings unconsciously, we “forget” that *nothing* really has any intrinsic meaning, and that either we assigned these qualities and meanings to the people and things in our lives ourselves, or they were assigned for us when we were too little to know any better.

This is why people can assign completely different meanings to the same thing. Because you assign all meaning to everything (even though you may be doing it unconsciously), you can create whatever world you want through the meanings you choose to assign to people and things in your life. Make everything good, and the world is good; make everything bad, and the world is bad.

In most cases, we did not consciously choose the way we assign meanings. Rather, they were chosen for us by our primary caregivers and other cultural influences when we were too small to know any better. We can, however, realize that these assignments of meaning are arbitrary, and change them in any way we want.

A wise man once said “It’s okay to play Hamlet, but don’t fall into the trap of thinking you are Hamlet.” If you think you are Hamlet, your life is a tragedy, because everyone dies by the end of the play. If you know you are just playing, you can have fun with it. Similarly, if you know everything is innately neutral and that you have assigned all the meaning to everything in life, you are playing, and you can therefore be the creator of your own experience. If, however, you forget—and think that people and things really do innately have the meanings that were taught to you when you were too small to question them—you lose your creative power, and will to some degree create suffering for yourself.

...nothing in the universe has any innate meaning.

Again, meditation gradually creates the expanded awareness that allows you to step back and see that nothing in the universe has any innate meaning.

Does this mean that you can do anything you want, since there is no innate right or wrong? No, it does not. All actions have consequences. The conscious person sees the consequences of each feeling, each thought, and each action, and acts accordingly, taking full responsibility for what is created.

When you are in distress, check to see if you are violating any of these principles, or if viewing the situation through the filter of these principles creates a shift for you. Whatever you do, make your life one of mastery of these principles, and you will create increasing happiness, success, and inner peace.

The Nine Principles for Conscious Living

Principle #1: Let Whatever Happens Be Okay

The first principle is that of letting whatever happens be okay. The amount a person suffers in their life is directly related to how much they are resisting the fact that “things are the way they are.” This has got to be one of the KEY pieces of human wisdom. *If there is suffering or discomfort, there is resistance to the way things are. Period.*

To master this principle, *addictions* or *attachments* to things being other than they are must be upgraded to preferences. This means that when “what is” is not what you want, you do not suffer over it (get angry, sad, fearful, anxious and so on) and your happiness and inner peace are therefore not controlled by forces outside of you. You *prefer* things to be such and so, but you’re not *attached* to them being that way.

To the degree a person is willing and able to let whatever happens be okay, they do not suffer. It’s as simple as that. People with many rules about how things are suppose to be suffer more because, no matter how much care they take to protect their rules and see that they are followed, both by themselves and by others, these rules are often violated. These rules are part of that map of reality that we create during childhood in order to be/feel safe in our family. In any family, you are “safer” (or at least it seems so) if you follow the rules.

If there is suffering or discomfort, there is resistance to the way things are. Period.

In some families there are few rules about how things are “supposed” to be, or how people are supposed to behave. In these families, children learn to flow with and react to whatever happens with a certain amount of psychological and behavioral creativity and resiliency. In other families, there are many, many rules (sometimes rules about everything). In these families, responses are more automatic and pre-programmed, which stifles the inborn ability to resiliently deal with things as they arise in a creative and authentic manner. Sometimes, the rules are constantly shifting, or are illogical, unfair, cruel or impossible to follow, which can create great fear and anxiety.

Living according to the rules has a certain appeal, because you don’t have to think about each situation and come up with a creative response. Instead, you just follow the rules. This is life lived by a formula or recipe. Unfortunately, no rules can cover the nuances of each potential situation. Other people often don’t know the “correct” recipe for how to behave (what’s wrong with them?) and your responses become robotic and predictable and often not well-suited to the situation. Worse, the more often your rules are broken, the more you end up angry, anxious, sad, afraid or suffer in some other manner.

If you could let it be okay when someone breaks one of your rules, you wouldn’t have to suffer. (Of course they wouldn’t really be rules, then, would they?)

This doesn’t mean a person can’t be goal oriented and work toward making things the way they want them to be. But the emotionally healthy person *prefers* the outcome they seek rather than being *emotionally attached* to it. That means they work toward what they want but, whatever the outcome, they maintain their equanimity and inner peace. This approach, then, is not fatalism, or disinterest in the outcome, but rather a decision not to let the outcome throw you off-center. This is the meaning of upgrading your attachments to preferences, and the meaning of the non-attachment spoken of in Eastern philosophy (and spoken of in Christianity and other religions in other ways).

The key to handling challenging thoughts, situations and feelings is therefore not in resisting them, but rather in becoming as fully accepting of them as possible. Accept what you think and feel, and what happens around you, even if what you think and feel is uncomfortable, or what is happening is not as you would have preferred.

Here, then, is a *key* point. Though it looks as if our discomfort is created by the thing we don't like, or are otherwise resisting, in actual fact the discomfort we feel is actually caused by *our resistance to it*. When we stop resisting, the discomfort also stops. It may look as if the person, thing, event, or whatever, is creating our discomfort, but it is really our reaction to it, our unwillingness to accept it, that creates the discomfort.

Everyone has had something happen in their life that they strongly resisted, but ultimately came to terms with: a relationship that ended, for instance. At first, you go through all kinds of suffering, but at a certain point you move on and accept what has happened. At that exact moment, the suffering stops. Similarly, we've all heard of people who find out they are dying from a fatal illness, and who become totally peaceful about it once they *accept* the fact that it is happening.

It's not what happens that creates our suffering, it's our reaction to it!

Through acceptance, you empower yourself to heal, transform and release any unresolved mental or emotional material. Unless and until you can accept what you think and feel as a perfect manifestation of reality, you will remain attached to toxic attitudes and beliefs. But by being fully present to, and accepting of, your thoughts and feelings, you open the pathway for the unconscious to reorganize itself to progressively higher levels of functioning. When you sense discomfort, you are sensing resistance. When you sense resistance, meet it with acceptance. Ironically, once you stop resisting, you are much more effective in creating any external change you may have a preference for (not an attachment to).

This all ends up being nothing but platitudes if you don't take some kind of definite step to put it into practice. One thing that helps, of course, is daily meditation, especially with the Holosync audio technology we use at Centerpointe Research Institute, which dramatically accelerates the meditation process. Stimulating the brain with Holosync creates the kind of expanded awareness that makes it progressively easier to let whatever happens be okay.

The second thing you can do is to watch yourself, with great curiosity, as you resist—in other words, become more aware of the Let Whatever Happens Be Okay principle, and *practice* being more aware of how and when you resist. One way to do this is to write the principle on a 3x5 card. Carry it with you and read the principle several times throughout the day. Then, each time you find yourself violating the principle, make a mark on the card. When you find yourself following it, make a mark on the other side. In other words, keep score. This simple procedure will cause you to be more aware of your resistance, and as you do so, your resistance will diminish—and so will the amount you suffer.

An even more powerful approach is to adopt what I call *the witness perspective*. When you find yourself resisting (and, therefore, suffering in some way) don't try to stop resisting (which would only be more resistance). Instead, *watch* your resistance with curiosity, as if you were a scientist watching someone else's inner process. This watching, without any agenda for what *should* be happening, is the beginnings of what mystics call *expanded awareness*. The 3x5 card exercise is really a way to get you to begin watching. *If resistance is the poison, witnessing is the antidote*. Highly evolved persons are firmly established in the witness *all the time*, and in terms of ending discomfort and suffering in your life, watching the world from the witness perspective is your goal.

In a Principle #7, I will address the subject of witnessing in great detail.

As you begin to watch your responses to what is happening, it will become more and more obvious to you that you do, indeed, create your own suffering, and that suffering does *not* come from your environment. This will make it more and more difficult for you to keep creating it. As this happens, a whole new world opens up for you, and believe me, you'll like it!

So keep meditating, and resolve to practice the witness perspective until it becomes easy for you.

Principle #2: Threshold

One obstacle to mastering the Nine Principles is the fact that intellectually understanding them is not enough; you must integrate them at a very deep and experiential level. This requires *expanded consciousness*. It requires that you become conscious of the ordinarily unconscious internal mental/emotional processes that create your life. Without this awareness, you are nothing more than an automatic response mechanism, responding automatically to people and situations with unconscious responses learned while growing up.

Let's review – and build upon – the first of the Nine Principles: that of Letting Whatever Happen Be Okay. This principle is crucially important because when you are not attached to people, situations, and things being other than they are, your happiness and inner peace are *independent* of the circumstances around you. This allows your experience of life to come from inside, rather than being under the control of outside events. When you let whatever happens be okay, you can consciously *choose* to be happy and peaceful, even when the world is not the way you want it to be.

The second principle is the Principle of Threshold. It is a close relative of the first principle, in the sense that it describes a major reason *why* people have trouble letting whatever happens be okay. It is also a much more fundamental way of looking at mental and emotional health, and the real cause of dysfunctional feelings and behaviors.

The prevailing view in the mental health community is that childhood trauma leaves you with unresolved emotional “stuff” buried in the unconscious mind. This unresolved material, according to most mental health professionals, is the cause of your dysfunction, and needs to be brought to the surface to be “healed.”

After working with over 100,000 people over the last two decades, I no longer believe this description is accurate—or helpful. Here's another way to look at the question of emotional trauma and the resulting dysfunctional feelings and behaviors:

Each of us has a threshold for what we can handle coming at us from our environment. If that threshold is exceeded, we feel stressed. Eventually, we can even become overwhelmed. When we feel stressed, we attempt to cope in various ways that we learned while growing up—most of which, unfortunately, do not work.

My view is that all neurotic, addictive, obsessive/compulsive and dysfunctional feelings and behaviors—those things that send us to therapists, personal development seminars, self-help books, and all the many other ways we seek help—are all attempts to cope with being in an environment that gives us more input than we can handle.

Those with a threshold that is too low for their environment are chronically stressed, and, as a result, frequently exhibit and experience dysfunctional feelings and behaviors. Such feelings and behaviors include everything from anxiety, fear, annoyance, confusion, withdrawal, depression, anger, poor decision making skills, and violence; to alcohol and drug use, inappropriate sexual behavior, eating disorders and the like; and even more severe mental health problems, such as personality disorders and psychosis. Because of their low threshold, such people have a difficult time handling their environment, and their lives.

When we feel stressed, we attempt to cope in various ways that we learned while growing up—most of which, unfortunately, do not work.

What, then, creates a low threshold? Why can some people deal with almost anything, while others overreact to the smallest things? Here's the answer: when people are physically or emotionally traumatized while growing up, their threshold does not mature in a normal way. Because of this, what goes on around them (and often inside of them) bothers such people in a way that would not bother someone with a “normal” threshold.

A recent article in *Psychology Today*, “Stress...It's Worse Than You Think,” discusses the stress sensitivity of a person who has been traumatized: “...we can become sensitized, or acutely sensitive to

stress. Once that happens, even the merest intimation of stress can trigger a cascade of chemical reactions in brain and body that assault us from within.”

Psychologist Michael Meaney, Ph.D., of McGill University has said that, “sensitization leads the brain to re-circuit itself in response to stress. We know that what we are encountering may be a normal, everyday episode of stress, but the brain is signaling the body to respond inappropriately.”

Some scientists believe that everyone has a built-in gauge that controls our reaction to stress, a kind of biological thermostat (what I am calling your *threshold*) that, when working properly, keeps the body from launching an all-out response literally over spilled milk. According to psychologist Jonathan C. Smith, Ph.D., founder and director of the Stress Institute at Roosevelt University in Chicago, sensitization lowers this thermostat set-point.

“Years of research,” says Seymore Levine, Ph.D., of the University of Delaware, “has told us that people do become sensitized to stress and that this sensitization actually alters physical patterns in the brain. That means that once sensitized, the body just does not respond to stress the same way in the future. We may produce too many excitatory chemicals or too few calming ones; either way we are responding inappropriately.”

Another researcher, Jean King, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, believes that when certain stresses occur during developmental periods, it may be more damaging than stress suffered at other times: “The psychological events that are most deleterious probably occur during infancy and childhood—an unstable home environment, living with an alcoholic parent, or any other number of extended crises... What we now believe is that a stress of [great] magnitude occurring when you are young may permanently rewire the brain’s circuitry, throwing the system askew and leaving it less able to handle normal, everyday stress.”

...the brain goes into temporary chaos, and then spontaneously reorganizes itself at a higher level...

This, of course, is where all the various coping behaviors and feelings begin to manifest, causing all the various life-problems that lead people to therapy and other personal growth and personal development solutions. (I disagree, by the way, based on personal and clinical experience, with Dr. King’s contention that this re-wiring of the brain is “permanent.” It is very clear to me that meditation with Holosync, for instance, can raise your threshold.)

Traditional approaches to dealing with stress and emotional dysfunction have always seemed to me to be symptom-oriented, including the prevailing view I mentioned above in which unhealed “stuff down there” must be brought to the surface and healed—or the even more flawed view that we need to develop drugs that will supposedly “retune” the neurochemical system in the brain.

After nearly two decades of success in treating the “low threshold” problem, I have developed a more basic and more effective solution: *raise the threshold at which dysfunctional feelings and behaviors are triggered*. When this is done, these feelings and behaviors simply fall away because they are never—or, at least, rarely—triggered.

As those who have been in the Centerpointe program for any length of time, and who have spoken to me on the telephone, attended a Centerpointe retreat, or read my writings know, I firmly believe that meditation, and particularly meditation with Holosync sound technology, brings about a process of change and evolution in the brain that very dramatically raises this threshold, until it reaches—and eventually exceeds—the “normal” level. As this happens, dysfunctional feelings and behaviors, even those that have resisted other treatment, fall away and disappear.

The process through which this happens—in fact, through which all change happens—is elegantly described by scientist, Ilya Prigogine, in his Nobel Prize-winning work on complex systems. I will discuss this work in more detail in Principle #3. For now, I just want you to know that when people meditate, especially with Centerpointe’s Holosync technology, electrical brain wave patterns slow, simultaneously increasing electrical fluctuations in the brain. The brain cannot handle these increased fluctuations. As a result, the brain, and your internal map of reality, experiences a stimulus that pushes it beyond its current

threshold. In response, the brain goes into temporary chaos, and then spontaneously reorganizes itself at a higher level, one that *can* handle the increased input. In this way, your threshold for stress is raised.

Any *effective* spiritual practice or psychological process creates change in this same way: it gives the system that makes up who you are stimuli that cause the “old you” to temporarily go into chaos, followed by reorganization at a higher, more functional level.

This is, by the way, why the most chaotic events of your life have also been the most growthful. It’s also why people who use Holosync, or other powerful spiritual and psychological practices, experience such dramatic positive changes. It’s why dysfunctional feelings and behaviors fade as people progress in their spiritual practice, and why beings such as the Dalai Lama remain calm and centered regardless of what goes on around them. For those who have done the work necessary to raise their personal threshold, little or nothing can push them over it.

Dysfunctional feelings and behaviors are nothing more than coping methods gone awry, and once coping is no longer needed—because the threshold is so high that the system can no longer be stressed—the coping strategies are no longer needed. This is why raising one’s threshold is so important to those who want to become happy, peaceful, and conscious: it attacks the problem at the root, and bypasses the treatment of symptoms.

How can you use this principle? First of all, by continuing to do your daily spiritual practice, whatever it is. Next, by learning to recognize when you are in this process of overwhelm/chaos/reorganization, and by realizing that such times, though uncomfortable, are the prelude to powerful positive change, and should not to be resisted. Finally, by realizing that as you do the work necessary to increase your personal threshold, any suffering in your life will fall away and disappear.

It really is possible to live a life free of suffering, and raising your threshold is one sure way to get you there.

Principle #3: Chaos and Reorganization

Change is the one constant in this universe. One of the first things the Buddha noted when he began to teach was that everything changes. For that reason, understanding change, how it happens, what makes it difficult and what makes it easy, is of crucial importance to anyone on a spiritual or personal growth path.

But how does change work? Why does it happen? And, how can we allow it, without resisting and suffering?

The answer is found in the Nobel Prize-winning work of Russian-born Belgian theoretical chemist, Ilya Prigogine. Prigogine, working in the field of thermodynamics, became intensely curious about what seemed to be a contradiction between one of the basic laws of science and some equally basic observable facts, including the existence and evolution of life itself. This contradiction, though seemingly unrelated to our everyday lives, contains the seed of profound practical wisdom for anyone committed to mental, emotional, and spiritual growth.

The second law of thermodynamics (stay with me—this really isn't complicated, and it's very interesting) states that whenever work is done, some energy is irretrievably lost. When expanding steam causes a piston to move, for instance, some energy is lost from the system in the form of heat radiation due to friction. In addition, the machine itself, unless energy is added to the system in the form of an overhaul, new parts, etc., will wear out and eventually break down.

This fact of nature is called *the law of increasing entropy*. Entropy, simply put, is a measure of the amount of randomness or chaos in a system, and the law of increasing entropy is an expression of the fact the universe is irreversibly moving toward a state of increased disorder and randomness. Left to itself, with no energy input from the outside, any system will break down and become increasingly disordered. A car

...order arises not in spite of entropy, but because of it!

will turn to rust and fall apart, a mountain will be worn down, and so on. Even the expansion of the universe is a movement in the direction of increasing disorder, increasing entropy.

Yet we can see that many things in the universe tend toward increased order—the opposite of what the second law of thermodynamics predicts. Life has evolved as atoms became molecules, then amino acids, proteins, cells, multi-cellular life, social systems and so on—definitely a process of increasing order, and *against* the flow of increasing entropy. This seeming paradox puzzled scientists for over a hundred years until Prigogine discovered the key: that order arises not in spite of entropy, but *because* of it!

Dissipative Structures

For centuries, the scientific community had been more interested in idealized closed systems, systems that have no interaction with the environment—the molecules of hydrogen in a closed container, for instance, or an ideal machine. Prigogine, on the other hand, was interested in *open* systems, those that constantly interact with their environment, changing, growing and evolving. Living things are prime examples of open systems. Far from equilibrium, they constantly take in energy in the form of light, heat, nutrients, air, water, etc. and then dissipate to their environment carbon dioxide, heat, waste products, various activities and so on. In this way they, they constantly adjust to their environment, changing, growing, healing, learning.

Prigogine set out to study open systems in an effort to solve the riddle of how systems of increasing order (systems that can change, grow and evolve) can exist in a universe inevitably tending toward disorder and chaos. Studying certain far-from-equilibrium chemical processes, he obtained results which again seemed to contradict the

...this is not a universe of independent things, but rather one of process, a changing, flowing, evolving and intimately interconnected system of interactions.

second law of thermodynamics. That is, until he ascertained that while the system itself did indeed become increasingly ordered, it did so by dispersing entropy to its environment!

These experiments proved his hypothesis *that order emerges not in spite of chaos but because of it*—that evolution and growth are inherent in far-from-equilibrium (open) systems. The key to such systems is their ability not only to take in energy and matter from the environment, but *also to dissipate the resulting entropy to the environment*, creating an overall energy dynamic that does follow the second law of thermodynamics.

Prigogine called these open systems that evolve and grow by taking in energy and matter from their environment and dissipating the resulting entropy “dissipative structures.” Prigogine’s discoveries apply to every open system in the universe, whether a chemical system (as in Prigogine’s original experiments), a seed, a highway system, a corporation—or a human being.

Such structures, to maintain their existence, must interact with their environment, continually maintaining the flow of energy into and out of the system. And, rather than being the structure through which energy and matter flow, dissipative structures are, in fact, the flow itself. In other words, this is not a universe of independent things, but rather one of *process*, a changing, flowing, evolving and intimately interconnected system of interactions.

Evolutionary Growth: “Escape Into a Higher Order”

Dissipative structures (such as human beings) flourish in unstable, fluctuating environments. The more ordered and complex a system becomes, the more entropy it must dissipate to maintain its existence. Conversely, each system has an upper limit, due to its level of complexity, of how much entropy it can dissipate. This is a key point. If the fluctuations from the environment increase beyond that limit, the system, unable to disperse enough entropy into its environment, begins to become internally more entropic, more chaotic.

If the excessive input continues, the chaos eventually becomes so great that the system begins to break down. Finally, a point is reached where the slightest nudge can bring the whole system grinding to a halt. Either the system breaks down and ceases to exist as an organized system, or it spontaneously reorders itself in a new way. The change is a true quantum leap, a death and re-birth, and the main characteristic of the new system is that it *can* handle the fluctuations, the input from the environment, that overwhelmed the old system. In Prigogine’s words, the system “escapes into a higher order.”

**Out of chaos comes a new order,
a more evolved system.**

Out of chaos comes a new order, a more evolved system. This new system has a new stability and is able to more easily exist in the previously overwhelming environment. But if input increases again, to a level beyond the system’s new and higher capacity for dispersion of entropy, the process will repeat, resulting in new internal chaos and another reorganization at an even more evolved level.

The Human Brain as a Dissipative Structure

How does this affect you? The human brain is the ultimate dissipative structure, constantly taking in energy and matter from the environment, constantly dispersing entropy. We are able to handle amazing amounts of input from the environment, encountering all kinds of new ideas, stimuli, and events, handling them without threat to the system.

But if input (all that stuff that happens in your life) reaches a certain critical level, different for each individual, we begin to feel overwhelmed and become less and less able to deal with increased input.

We go into chaos. Eventually, the system (our mental construct of “what is”) is forced to break down or reorganize at a higher, more evolved, level. The process goes something like this: at first things make

sense; then, as chaos increases, they no longer make sense any more; finally, after reorganization, they make sense again, but in a whole new way, never before imagined.

Certain types of people, those who constantly open themselves to ideas and experiences, will be more likely to reach this “moment of truth”—what Abraham Maslow called “peak experience”—giving themselves the chance of “escaping into a higher order,” giving them a chance to evolve and grow. On the other hand, people who resist new ideas, who won’t try new experiences, who reject what doesn’t fit their beliefs, and who never doubt their way of seeing things—in other words, people who resist the influx of new energy, stimuli, ideas, and matter into their brains—almost never have peak experiences and evolve very slowly, if at all.

Eventually, the brain evolves to a point where it is able to perceive, experience, and be one with the interconnections of the entire universe...

If the input affecting the brain is strong enough, however, even a brain resistant to change can be impacted. This is what happens when we meditate. Meditation (particularly the technologically based Holosync meditation we use at Centerpointe Research Institute) creates fluctuations in the brain that eventually affect even our deepest, most unconscious resistance, creating change at a very deep level. Eventually, the brain evolves to a point where it is able to perceive, experience, and be one with the interconnections of the entire universe, allowing the healing of addictive and dysfunctional patterns and the growth of a profound sense of peace.

High-fluctuation Brainwave States and Evolution

Why does meditation affect the brain in this way? High frequency brain wave states, such as the beta state (that of normal, non-meditative consciousness), have very low amplitude. The wave form has little difference from its highest to its lowest point—a small amount of fluctuation. Lower frequency alpha and theta brain waves—those of traditional meditation (and the even deeper delta brain waves created by Holosync)—have very *high* amplitude—a large amount of fluctuation.

Since the amount of environmental fluctuation determines a system’s possibilities for evolutionary change, a beta state does not push the brain to evolve. In the alpha, theta, and delta states, however, the brain experiences larger fluctuations, which, as we have seen, stimulate evolutionary change in dissipative structures. When an open system like the human brain is exposed to such low-frequency, high-amplitude fluctuations, it can (and will) make the quantum leap to the next higher level.

If handled consciously, however, this chaos leads to positive change.

What, then, is the practical application of this model of change? And why does change often result in dysfunctional feelings and behaviors and other kinds of resistance?

Remember that chaos precedes change. Whenever there is chaos in your life, it means that your current map of reality is not able to handle the environment. In other words, you are over your personal threshold for what you can handle. If handled consciously, however, this chaos leads to positive change. At such times, remember that, 1) a new and higher threshold, and a new and more highly evolved map of reality will solve many of the problems that the old map of reality can’t handle, 2) chaos is a sign you’re getting ready to create a new map by reorganizing at a higher and more functional level, *and if you get out of the way*, this will happen more easily and quickly.

In other words, chaos is *good*!

Most people don’t recognize when they’re in chaos, for several reasons. Some people self-medicate whenever they begin to feel stressed. They reach for a drink, a joint, a cigarette, food, a sexual partner, or an adrenaline rush—anything to mask their feelings. They don’t realize that chaos is a growth opportunity and that by not taking advantage of it they keep their map of reality from evolving—which means that every time it is stimulated in the same way, they will become overwhelmed again. A new and more highly evolved map, however, could handle what the current map can’t, ending their overwhelm.

Also, most people don't take responsibility for the chaos or stress they feel. They project it onto something outside of themselves. They find something to blame. "I'm stressed because of him." "I'm stressed because I lost my job." "I'm stressed because of the terrorist attacks." "I'm stressed because of my kids/parents/partner/finances/health/whatever."

But the only reason you are stressed or in chaos is *that your threshold for what you can handle is too low*. And, the one and only real solution is to raise that threshold higher.

So first, notice when there is chaos. "Here I am, in chaos." Then, acknowledge *why* it's happening. "My threshold is too low." Then, remind yourself that chaos is the first step in reorganizing your map of reality at a higher level—one that will work much better—an that this is actually an opportunity. "Hallelujah! I'm about to evolve, and once I make the leap to the next level, I'll be able to handle more, and lots of things that cause me to suffer will fall away!" Let it be okay that you're temporarily in chaos, and just watch what happens (more about that later). Resisting will, at best, make the process painful, and, at worst, will keep the reorganization from happening at all.

Chaos is a growth opportunity.

Few really understand how change works. Instead, they fight it. If they win this battle, they lose the war. By fighting change, you get to be pushed past the same old low threshold over and over, experiencing the same pain over and over.

Understanding change will save you untold suffering, if use your knowledge. Change is natural. You don't need to know "how" to do it. The entire universe has evolved, for billions of years, by this very mechanism. All you have to do is get out of the way.

Here, again, are the steps:

1. Notice and acknowledge that you are in chaos.
2. Realize it's happening because your threshold for what you can handle is too low to handle your current environment.
3. Remember that this is a good thing, and means you are about to evolve to the next level, where many current problems will disappear.
4. Let it be okay that this is happening.
5. Watch with curiosity and don't resist.

Or, you can avoid being in situations where you get pushed past your threshold (good luck). You can stay home, isolate yourself, don't participate in life, don't take in new information, etc. Or, blow off steam when the pressure builds. Get angry, worry, compulsively talk, or exercise or eat or have sex (or whatever you like to do). Of course, you'll keep the same threshold in that case, with the same limitations. You already know what that's like.

Principle #4: The Map is Not the Territory

If you took in all the stimuli that comes at you on a moment-by-moment basis, it would be overwhelming. If you tried to take into account everything that is happening in each moment as you made each decision, the sheer number of details and interconnections would overwhelm you. If you took into account all the connections that make up who you are, it would be too much, since ultimately you are connected to everything. There's just too much, and it comes at you in an unrelenting torrent of information. In order to manage all this information, you have to filter it in some way.

So, to get yourself through life, you create an internal map of reality you can refer to as you navigate through life. Just as with a road map, this map is a scaled-down version of reality. But just as with a road map, it doesn't show everything (how could it?), and in some ways it isn't a very good representation of reality. You can't go grocery shopping on Rand McNally maps. You can't go camping on the little triangles that represent mountains. And you can't get wet or go water skiing in the blue areas that represent oceans, lakes and rivers.

You mind is a goal seeking mechanism and it uses your internal map of reality as...its instructions for what to seek and what to create.

The map is not the territory. It's not meant to be. It's just a *representation* of reality—not reality itself.

Now, if the territory changes, you're going to need a new map. If you're driving along and the road ends because of a new shopping center but the map says the road goes through, it might be time to get a new map.

Or, if the old map was created based on crude technology that could not create a really accurate map, and new technology, such as aerial photography, becomes available, you might want to get a new map.

Otherwise, your ability to navigate correctly might be affected.

Similarly, we all create a map of reality as we are growing up. Without it, we would have to figure out what a door is and how to open it each time we came to one, or re-learn how to relate to people every time we met a new person. And beyond these simple examples, this map also contains much more complex generalizations and other internal mental/emotional aspects of how we see ourselves and our relationship to the rest of the universe, including beliefs, values, strategies, decisions, and a number of other parts of what I call your internal map of reality.

This map is our internal representation of reality, and it is very useful, in the same way a road map is useful. The closer to reality our map can be without being unwieldingly complex, the better it functions. However, if we grow up with trauma or abuse, or if the picture of reality we received in our family situation only works in our family but isn't that useful or accurate when we go out into the rest of the world, we may have trouble. If sharing vulnerable feelings is not part of our map, for instance, we may have trouble being intimate with others and may feel lonely and isolated. If our map emphasizes resisting what we don't like about the world, we may end up mired in constant struggle and suffering. If our map tells us we better watch out or other people will hurt us (not realizing that some will and others may not), we may miss out on many beautiful parts of life.

Your map of reality, in addition to being an aid to navigation, is also a blueprint your mind uses to create your life. Your mind is a goal-seeking mechanism, and it uses your internal map of reality as its software, its instructions for what to seek and what to create. If there are riches in your life, or poverty, or happiness, or adventure, or suffering—or anything—it comes from your mind creating your experience based on your map.

Your mind doesn't say "Whoa. Wait a minute. This map is not very accurate and it's creating a lot of suffering." It just says "Okay. I see. Create this...and this...and this...and this." It doesn't care what the map is, or whether it's a happy or unhappy map. The mind is just a faithful creator, creating your life based on what the map says.

As people grow up and find various ways their map does not serve them, those who are more conscious seek to change or improve the map (those who are unconscious just blame the world for not being like their map).

Approaches to personal change that actually work, then, bring about changes in this map of reality. And here is where the trouble starts for those of us seeking personal growth.

In order to replace a map (or a part of the map) that isn't serving you very well, there has to be an interim period where the old map goes into temporary chaos, breaks down, and is then replaced by a new map, one that more accurately reflects reality and more resourcefully allows you to be happy, creative, and spiritually connected to other people. If you want to create happiness, inner peace, enlightenment, oneness with God, or anything else you want, you will go through many maps, each one better and more accurate—and more useful and effective in creating what you want.

Getting a new internal map is the secret of growth.

Almost all people try to protect the old map (your concept of who you are and how you relate to the rest of the universe) when this initial chaos stage of growth begins—where you begin to notice the old map isn't working so well. This attempt to hold the old map together is caused by the mistaken idea that this map *is who you are*—that the map really *is* the territory, rather than a just a tool you use to navigate through life.

In other words, we create this map (or rather, it is automatically created in response to our life experiences, especially those with our primary caregivers), and then we *forget* that it's just a map. Instead, we think it's who we are. When our map can't handle what's going on, and begins to fall apart as part of the process of reforming in a new and better way, we think *we* are falling apart. As a result, we resist the process, sabotaging our own growth.

This map is often called *the ego* by western psychology, and is your concept of who you are and what your relationship is to the rest of the world. It is the limitation of this map (its inability to adequately "map the territory") that creates the over-threshold experience and the resulting dysfunctional feelings and behaviors and other suffering I've discussed already.

Therefore, letting the map go through the evolutionary process (that of going into chaos temporarily and then reorganizing at a higher level) results in relief from the problems and limitations of the old map, and gives you a new ability to deal with what was previously stressful or overwhelming.

Getting a new internal map is the secret of growth, yet we fight it because we think we *are* the old map!

So the main impediment to positive change comes from the mistaken belief that this map is *who we are* rather than just a handy *representation* of who we are. Believing this, it's no wonder that, when the map begins to fall apart in preparation for reforming in a new and better way, we think "Oh my God! I'm falling apart!" Since we think we are what is falling apart, we do everything we can to hold the old map together, resisting the chaos/reorganization process. This is where all the dysfunctional feelings and behaviors, and all the sufferings we put ourselves through, come from. Fear, depression, anger, anxiety, substance abuse, psychosis, bi-polar disorder, multiple personalities, ADD, many physical diseases, traumatic stress disorder, and many other mental, emotional, and physical problems, are all ways we humans use to try and fight off the death of the old map and the birth of the new.

But what if we said: "Great! My old map of reality, which isn't working that well anyway, and has a number of deficiencies that cause me all kinds of suffering, is falling apart. That means I'll soon have a new map that works much better and allows me to be happier and more peaceful inside!" In that case, we would just stand aside and let the process complete itself—and save ourselves a lot of trouble and suffering.

It is very helpful, then, to learn to recognize when this process is happening, to learn and be able to recognize your favorite methods of trying to save the old map, and to learn how to let it be okay—instead of trying to save something that isn't helpful to you anyway.

Some people call this having faith, and I highly recommend it.

So, know that you are not your ego. You are not your *concept* of who you are. You are not your map of reality. It's just a map! And if it goes into chaos, that chaos is part of the process of positive change and the prelude to a better and more functional map. When the old map falls apart, you will still be there, ready to receive a new map—much better off, and much happier.

Have faith. And don't try to go camping on those little triangles.

Principle #5: Responsibility as Empowerment

Everyone who has been on a personal growth path for any length of time has been told that "you are the creator of your world" or "you are not a victim" or some variation thereof. Most would agree to both statements if asked. However, when in a real-life situation, where something happens we don't like, even those who "have been meditating 75 years" or "knew Werner Erhardt personally and helped design all his trainings" or who claim to have taken every personal growth training and read every self-help book on Earth (twice), begin blaming something outside of themselves for what has happened.

Giving lip service to these principles is not going to be helpful to you. Intelligent and sophisticated sophistries (false statements) to convince yourself and others that you are not responsible for what is happening are not going to help you, either.

Why? Because until you realize that you create your experience of your world, including all happiness and all suffering, you will be at the "effect" end of the cause and effect process. You, and your experience of life, will be controlled by, and at the whim of, whatever is happening around you. Your only chance for happiness will be to find perfect circumstances and to find a way to keep them that way.

Taking personal responsibility is not about blame but rather about personal power.

And you know, if you think about it, how likely that is.

The truth is, *you* are responsible for every feeling or behavior you have, in the sense that it is either your chosen response to something that happens, or is an automatic unconscious response based on the way your internal map of reality has been structured.

This is very different from saying you are to blame for every feeling or behavior you have. Taking personal responsibility is not about blame but rather about personal power. If someone or something outside of you is the cause of how you feel or behave, you are powerless—a victim. If you, or at least your unconscious processes, are at cause, you have power and can do something to change the situation to one that is happier and more peaceful. Things outside of you may be a stimulus for you, but how you respond comes from you, either consciously or unconsciously.

You can live in a world where other people or events "cause" you to feel the way you feel, but there is a price. The price is that you will feel bad a great deal of the time. Or, you can choose to take total responsibility for every feeling you have and every behavior you have. Having done so, you suddenly are at the "cause" end of the cause and effect process, where you can choose how you feel and how you behave.

If what you feel and how you behave is a *choice*, you can, of course, just make the right choice: to feel something that feels good, or to behave in a way that has the greatest chance of having a good outcome. But what do you do with all those feelings and behaviors that seem to come unbidden, automatically? Since for most people, even those who are "advanced" seekers, the majority of feelings and behaviors fall into this category, this is a very important question.

First, begin by accepting this main premise: that you *are* responsible for the feelings and behaviors you have—even if you cannot directly see how you are creating them. Most feelings and behaviors that "happen" to you are conditioned responses, and somewhere, unconsciously, your internal map of reality tells you to feel or behave in a certain way when you are stimulated in a certain way. Perhaps when your father yelled at you as a child, you felt afraid, then angry. Once this has been set up as a conditioned response, like Pavlov's dogs salivating when they heard the bell announcing dinner, someone yelling at you will cause you to become afraid and then angry, and then perhaps behave in a certain way.

It seems as if these emotions are *caused* by the yelling. They are not. They are *triggered* by the yelling perhaps, but they are caused by the conditioned response set up, by your past, in your internal map of reality. Change the parts of your internal map of reality that create this response and you could have a completely different feeling, followed by a completely different behavior.

If the only yelling you had ever heard was Groucho yelling at Chico, you might have a conditioned response to laugh every time you heard yelling.

You can live in a world where other people or events “cause” you to feel the way you feel, but there is a price.

Therapists often describe the phenomenon of exhibiting a certain feeling as a conditioned response due to childhood trauma *going into a regressed state*. This means that when someone yells at you now, you feel like a powerless child, just as you did when your father yelled at you, even though you are now a much more powerful adult. Again, this is a conditioned response, and the yelling is not causing the feeling, it is merely triggering it.

How can you tell the difference between a cause and a trigger? If there is more than one possible response, if different people respond in different ways to the same stimulus, the stimulus is a trigger. If there is only one possible response, the stimulus is a cause. Pouring water over your head will get your head wet. The water causes the wetness. Everyone who has the water poured over their head will get wet. Yelling at someone could cause anger, laughter, disinterest, puzzlement, fear, or any number of other reactions, depending on the situation, and the way that person’s internal map of reality is structured. Yelling is a trigger, not a cause.

Even though yelling may result in some sort of uninvited feeling, just *knowing* that it is triggering a part of your internal map of reality, and that your internal map is generating your response, is a start in taking responsibility for what is happening. This will begin the process of changing your internal map of reality so you can make different choices.

There are many ways to make changes to your internal map of reality. Centerpointe’s Holosync Solution program and the various Centerpointe knowledge products can help, as they are designed specifically to help you make changes in your internal map of reality.

Your goal is for each *response* to each event be a *choice*. This means you can choose what is most resourceful for you, what makes you happiest, most peaceful, and most successful, in the way you want. As long as you are an automatic response mechanism, with the part of you that generates your feelings and behaviors operating outside your awareness, you are at the whim of events and people around you.

Until you firmly acknowledge that every feeling and every behavior is coming from you, regardless of what the world sends your way, you cannot make any progress toward this goal.

To be able to choose how to feel, to choose the state you are in at any given time, and to choose how you behave, and to be able to do all of this in the most resourceful way possible, is one of the major components of freedom, and is very worth working toward.

How does the Centerpointe program help this process? As you use the program, what was unconscious and out of awareness becomes increasingly conscious. Your conscious awareness of what you are doing, and why you are doing it, increases. The program develops a "witness" part of you that is able to objectively pay attention to everything without being emotionally involved. This is what spiritual teachers mean when they speak of expanded awareness. Expanded awareness allows you to see your conditioned responses for what they are.

Until you firmly acknowledge that every feeling and every behavior is coming from you, regardless of what the world sends your way, you cannot make any progress toward this goal.

Our culture has gravitated toward the popularization of victimhood over the past several decades. No one is responsible for anything that happens to them. Smokers are not responsible for getting lung cancer, shooters of guns are not responsible for firing them, burglars even sue homeowners for injuring themselves while breaking into a house. Criminals are not responsible for crimes they commit because they had an unhappy childhood, or were under the influence of drugs. Battering husbands (or wives) are not responsible for beating their spouses because the other made them angry, or did such and such to them. These are the more extreme cases, but you can, I’m sure, fill in the details from your own life, if you are honest.

It is so easy to say "I can't do _____. I have traumatic stress disorder, ADD, a cold, alcoholism, no money, don't read well, my father was distant, my mother was smothering, I grew up in the inner city, I

grew up in the country, blah, blah, blah. In this popularization of victimhood, there is an underlying presupposition that it is somehow easier to be a victim, that there is some benefit to not taking responsibility, that taking responsibility would be onerous, difficult, a struggle, too much work.

I want you to know that, without exception, it is being a victim that is onerous, difficult, a struggle, and too much work. Being responsible for *everything* that happens, and for every feeling and behavior, is the *easy* way to live. It is the way to happiness, inner peace, and a productive life. It is the sure way to end all the dramas in your life.

I highly recommend it.

Principle #6: Conscious Change

Every time I sit down to write about one of these principles, I undergo a few moments of indecision.

Why? Because these principles are, in a way, very enigmatic, in the sense that they are elegantly simple and, at the same time, densely impenetrable. Until you "get" each principle, it seems inconceivable, unable to be understood, impractical, unhelpful. Though each of these principles can be understood and integrated into your life in an instant, in actual practice it can take years for the real meaning, in a practical sense, to dawn on you.

Do you remember when you learned to ride a bicycle? You would ride along with your dad or mom running alongside holding the bike up. Then they would let go, and pretty soon you would fall over. It seemed hard, and you wondered if you could do it.

Then, mom or dad let go but you didn't know they'd let go, and several seconds later when you looked back, they were half a block behind you and you were riding, all by yourself! Hey, this is easy!

I remember thinking that tying my shoes was the most complicated series of motions ever thought up by anyone, and wondered how my mother could tie my shoe so easily (while talking on the phone, even!). But once you learn it, it seems so easy.

These principles are the same as riding a bike or tying your shoe. They seem hard, but once you get it, they are easy—and because of them, life becomes much easier. If there is one thing I'm trying to teach in the sharing these principles with you, it is that life *is* easy. If it's hard for you, *you're* doing something, consciously or unconsciously, to make it hard.

Once you take responsibility...you can take control and create things the way you want them.

I see or hear from people every day who experience one drama, one disaster, one stress after another in their life. Life is mostly bumps and bruises and suffering for them. From my perspective, it's easy to see how they're creating all of this—and also how they can stop creating it.

But for them, it all just seems to be "happening" to them. They don't yet see that what happens comes from them, from their map of reality, from what they focus on, from their internal and external strategies for making each moment-by-moment decision.

In the previous section we discussed personal responsibility. This is an extremely important principle because until you take responsibility, until you realize that what happens (or at the very least your *response* to what happens) is coming from you and *not* from anything outside of you, you can't do anything about it. Once you take responsibility, though, you can take control and create things the way you want them.

The next step, once you accept personal responsibility, is to become more conscious. And here is where I get into my moment of indecision. How do I describe "conscious" to you? Everyone throws this term around as if they know what it means, but as I look around, it is not at all apparent to me that they do understand. Being conscious does not mean being politically correct, following the Dalai Lama, being aware of injustice, saving the whales, communicating with God or Jesus or spirit guides—or anything like these things.

Being conscious means not operating as an automatic response mechanism. It means seeing what is happening, on all levels simultaneously, at every moment, and choosing an emotional, mental, behavioral, and spiritual response based on what is the most resourceful choice in that moment. Ultimately, it means doing all of this automatically, without conscious thought (there's a seeming contradiction!—being conscious, but doing so automatically). You process all possibilities in a split second and respond in just the right way—not with a preset response (which is what I mean by being an automatic response mechanism), but with a choice that is optimal for the situation.

Most people, unfortunately, run on automatic. They have rules or set procedures for what to think, what to feel, and what to do in various situations—rules or procedures they learned when they were too young to know any better—and these responses happen automatically, like Pavlov's dog salivating when it

hears the bell. Some of these responses were learned through physical or emotional pain, and are particularly deeply imbedded. Others are just things we accepted as true because our parents told us they were true over and over at an age when our parents seemed like infallible gods.

At the very least, many of these rules and procedures serve to help us deal with our anxiety, or what I often refer to as *overwhelm*. We feel anxious, so we withdraw, get angry, have a cigarette, eat, exercise, act silly, have a drink, talk too much, space out, have sex, tense up, buy something, watch TV, cry...or one of thousands of other behaviors or feelings. We don't choose to do them because they seemed to be the most resourceful thing we could do at the time. We just do them, automatically. Usually they are anything but resourceful. Often, they lead to drama, suffering, problems, sadness.

It is impossible to do something that isn't good for you, or is in some way non-resourceful (destructive) to you, and also do it consciously.

A person who has done much of their life unconsciously doesn't know they are feeling, behaving, responding and living unconsciously, and you may not believe me when I tell you this is something you are probably doing, and doing quite a lot, if not all of the time. It takes becoming more conscious to realize what you were doing.

When, in The Holosync Solution support materials, we describe the idea of being the witness, when I say, "just watch with curiosity," we're trying to get you to begin the process of becoming more conscious. I will have much more to say about this when I get to the principle of witnessing in the next chapter.

Here, though, is the big benefit of being more conscious: *It is impossible to do something that isn't good for you, or is in some way non-resourceful (destructive) to you, and also do it consciously.* You can do something destructive to yourself (feelings, beliefs, values, behaviors, etc.) over and over as long as you do it unconsciously (without continuous conscious awareness). But once you begin to do the non-resourceful feeling, behavior, belief, value, etc. consciously, it will begin to fall away. *You just cannot do something that is not good for you and also do it consciously.*

The trick, of course, is to remain conscious, which is, as I said earlier, one of those things, like riding your bike or tying your shoe, that seems really hard until you get it, and then it seems easy and you wonder why you ever thought it was hard. For this reason, as you unravel, in your own life, the mystery of what it means to be conscious, do not let yourself become discouraged. Keep going, keep trying, keep watching, and at some point you will turn around and no one will be holding the bicycle up, and you'll be doing it, and it will all make sense.

We have many ways of going unconscious so as not to deal with what we're feeling or how we're behaving: overeating, drugs and alcohol, projection and blaming, spacing out, analyzing, distracting oneself through a thousand and one different methods, and many, many others. To become conscious, you must 1) identify your favorite ways of going unconscious, 2) be vigilant in noticing them, and 3) be committed to developing the ability to be the witness to what is happening, developing that part of you that stands aside and notices what you are doing, feeling, or thinking, as you do it, watching without judgement or comment, just watching with curiosity, like a scientist.

This is one of the greatest benefits of The Holosync Solution program, and one of the most difficult to describe or quantify: that using Holosync, over time, creates and increases the ability to remain conscious and deal with things consciously.

So listen every day to your Holosync soundtracks, let whatever happens when you listen be okay, and take some time, especially when you feel an uncomfortable emotion, to just watch yourself have it.

Pretty soon you'll be saying "Look, Mom! No hands!"

Principle #7: Witnessing

Everyday we communicate with dozens of people who are using the Centerpointe program. Some are having a hard time with the program, and with life in general (usually for the same reason). Some are angry, depressed, fearful, anxious, or confused—or are creating any number of other responses. One of the main instructions we give these people is to "watch what is happening—watch with curiosity."

This is a deceptively simple instruction that nonetheless has tremendous power. What does it mean? And how do you do it?

Being the witness, the watcher, the observer, has been a part of meditative practice for centuries, but what this really means is not often explained in a way that makes down-to-earth, practical sense.

You may be tired of hearing me harp on the subject of resistance, and how resistance creates any discomfort you may be experiencing in your life. I find myself saying or writing at least fifty times a week that *if you are having any discomfort in the Centerpointe program or in life in general, it's because somewhere, on some level, there is resistance*. Some people think I say this just to blow off people who are having what they consider to be a negative reaction to Holosync, to deflect blame from Holosync.

The main source...of both personal power and peace of mind is taking all responsibility for what happens.

Not so. Not so at all. To adopt a position of power, one in which you have control over your destiny, you must take full responsibility for whatever response you are creating to whatever is happening. If you cannot acknowledge that you are creating your response to everything that happens, you are helpless, a victim of your environment.

Only when you take responsibility is there a possibility of doing something about your situation or creating something different. The main source, then, of both personal power and peace of mind is taking all responsibility for what happens.

So, first, you must acknowledge that, whatever your experience with Holosync or with life in general, it is *your* response. It comes from you, from some aspect of who you are. As I've said so many times, "Life may provide the stimulus, but you provide the response." Sometimes this response comes from an unconscious part of you, one you have little or no control over (or so it seems), but, nonetheless, it comes from you (rather from some force outside of you, regardless of the appearance).

Why would you create a negative response? Because a part of you is in resistance to whatever is happening. Why, then, would someone resist it? Because some part of you is trying to reorganize, to change, whether as a result of the Holosync stimulus or something else that pushes you to grow, but you associate the old way with your safety and, at least unconsciously, don't feel safe letting the change happen.

Perhaps you have stayed very self-contained since you were a small child, not letting anyone get close to you because, in your family, it wasn't safe to get close. But now Holosync is breaking up the old pattern and creating a new ability to be close, intimate, and connected with others. Consciously you may want this, but since letting go of the old defense mechanism feels unsafe to that unconscious "inner child" part of you, you resist. The more essential this old way of being seems to your safety, the greater the resistance will be. And the greater the resistance, the greater the discomfort, the greater the suffering.

Whatever the discomfort, whatever the upheaval, whatever the issue, some part of you—some inner strategy that you associate with safety—is trying to grow and evolve, and another part of you is not willing to let go.

What can you do? Some people (those for whom resistance is a major tool in their survival arsenal, as was the case with me) just want to quit. "I didn't start this program to be pissed off all the time," they say to me. Or they say, "I feel worse than ever. Who would want to do this?!"

If resistance is the poison, witnessing is the antidote.

Remember, however, that the majority of people do *not* create this kind of resistance, or they create it only occasionally when something big is shifting—I don't want to give the impression that you are looking forward to all kinds of discomfort as you use Holosync, because chances are, you aren't. Only if you resist will you create discomfort.

Here is where the concept of watching, witnessing, of being the observer, comes to play. *If resistance is the poison, witnessing is the antidote.*

First of all, remember that the discomfort is not necessary. It is only there because of your resistance. It is *not* there because life is unfair, because of the situation, because of other people, or because of Holosync. It is there because you don't feel safe changing and are resisting the change, or because you are resisting someone or something being the way it is.

Some very wise people, over many centuries of experience with the process of personal mental, emotional, and spiritual change, have discovered that if you can just step back and watch whatever is happening, with *no* agenda for what does or does not happen, the resistance disappears. And, any changes that are trying to take place can happen without suffering.

All personal change approaches that work involve the creation of a greater awareness of what is happening, based on the fundamental principle that you can only continue behaviors and feelings that are self-destructive if you do them unconsciously—without awareness. Most of us have very elaborate strategies designed to keep us unaware, but there is a very simple way to defeat them.

If you step back the next time you are feeling any kind of discomfort and say to yourself "There I am, feeling angry" (or whatever it is you are feeling), and then just *notice* yourself being angry, without trying

Curiosity is on the opposite side of the fence from resistance, and without resistance you cannot create suffering.

to stop it or change it, without any agenda for what should happen. Any feeling you have will be a sensation in your body, so just notice where in your body you feel it. Notice if it stays the same or changes, if it stays in one place or moves around. Become genuinely curious about it. Pretend you are a scientist who has been searching the

Amazon jungle for 20 years for a certain butterfly, and finally...here it is! How carefully and curiously would you watch? Bring that amount of curiosity to bear on whatever is happening for you in that moment.

Whatever uncomfortable feelings you are having, you've probably been having them off and on for a long time. But I would be willing to bet that you have never really watched them with curiosity to find out what is really happening and how you create them. You're so busy trying to make them stop, or blaming them on someone else, or analyzing them, or in some other way *becoming* unconscious about them.

Notice that you cannot be stuck in your suffering very effectively if a part of you is watching. If you are curious and watching, it becomes harder and harder to resist. Curiosity is on the opposite side of the fence from resistance, and without resistance you cannot create suffering. Once you are successfully watching, it becomes very obvious that you could make another choice of how to respond to whatever is happening.

On the other hand, if you are watching with an agenda—to stop the feeling—you're not really watching. To be the witness, you must have no agenda other than to watch and be curious.

Some personal growth teachers will tell you to "love the feeling," or "embrace the feeling," or "surrender to the feeling." What they really mean is to stop resisting it. And the way to do that is to become genuinely curious about it and watch.

Several years ago, in the infancy of the Centerpointe program, a woman in the program called me in an extremely agitated state. "I'm freaking out!" she said. "I feel like I'm coming apart at the seams! Help!" She really was freaked out—as freaked out as a person can be and still successfully communicate with someone else.

I told her to go lie down on her bed and very carefully notice the feelings that were happening in her body, to be very curious about every sensation, and then call me back and give me a report. Twenty minutes later she called to tell me that (damn it) she couldn't really give me much of a report because the whole

feeling had disappeared as soon as she adopted the point of view of the curious watcher. All she felt now was a kind of euphoria, as if something had shifted for her!

She was watching with curiosity, and because she thought I wanted a report, her agenda was not to make the feeling go away, but just to notice what was happening. If you do the same thing, you'll get the same result, but you cannot be trying to make the feeling change. You must be watching with real curiosity.

It's your life and they're your feelings. You can become genuinely curious about them, can't you? I hope so.

One of the amazing things that happens as people go through the Centerpointe program is that this "watcher" becomes more and more prominent, more and more easy to summon when needed, and soon becomes a constant companion. This is the real beginning of what meditators call "expanded awareness." From this point, expanded awareness grows even greater, to include an increased sense of connection with the rest of the universe—but it begins with the simple ability to reserve a small part of you that just watches yourself and whatever is happening with detachment and curiosity.

...it begins with the simple ability to reserve a small part of you that just watches yourself and whatever is happening with detachment and curiosity.

In fact, I'll go even further and say that this watcher part of you is the real you, the Self with a capital "S." The rest is just a creation of your mind—all the analyzing and thinking and blaming and suffering is just your mind distracting you from the real you. This is why people originally created meditation: to quiet the mind, so as to get past it to see their real Self.

So the real answer to the question of what to do when you are resisting, *is to just watch*. Stop fighting with yourself and just notice what is happening. Distress and discomfort fall away when you do this, almost as if by magic.

So if resistance is your middle name, as it was mine before I went through the Centerpointe program, please take very seriously the simple instruction to "watch with curiosity." It takes some practice and some will-power because the habit of resisting is deeply ingrained and very much an automatic response. But after some practice, it will become an effortless part of you—your own personal "Prince of Peace" who will help you through any situation you encounter. And, of course, remember that daily meditation with Holosync is a very effective way to foster and strengthen this very essential part of you.

I have written here mostly about resistance as people from time to time experience it while doing the Centerpointe Program, but this principle applies to everything in your life. In any situation where you are uncomfortable, no matter what it is, you are resisting people, things or situations being the way they are. To the degree you do that, you suffer. If you can step aside and watch yourself have whatever reaction you are having, you will find that there are other choices of how to respond, at which point you can pick the one you would like to have, rather than just being an automatic response mechanism who suffers every time you are stimulated in a certain way.

People with "higher consciousness" or "expanded awareness" are those who have mastered this principle of witnessing. You can do it, too. Start practicing and keep meditating.

Principle #8: Good and Bad Generalizations

By now, most of you know that I am of the opinion that it is not necessary to live a life that contains suffering, and that there are definite ways to change your life from one containing suffering to one where you are happy and peaceful all the time.

Most of you also know that, in my opinion, the way to do this is to cultivate the ability to let whatever happens be okay and to not resist "what is." This doesn't mean you're okay with injustice and suffering or don't do anything about them. It means you emotionally accept things the way they are and do not resist what is.

Resisting what is and wanting to change what is are not the same, and the difference is one of attachment to the outcome. The person who is attached to the outcome suffers if they do not get the outcome they want, whereas the happy, peaceful person prefers the outcome they want but are not attached to it. If the outcome they get is not what they wanted, they remain just as happy and peaceful as they were to begin with. Their happiness comes from within, and is not dependent on what goes on around them.

Resisting what is and wanting to change what is are not the same, and the difference is one of attachment to the outcome.

Many people are not only unhappy as a result of what goes on around them, but are unhappy because of what goes on inside. At the same time, this inside unhappiness helps create outside conditions that give them something to resist in their outer life. This is one way in which people "create their own universe." Unfortunately, this universe is often not a happy one. On the other hand, you can always create a new and happier world for yourself, at any time.

Based on our early life interactions with our primary care-givers, we all develop generalizations about who we are and what our relationship is to the rest of the world. These generalizations (part of what I call our internal map of reality) divide everything into two categories, those that we think are "good" or acceptable, and those we think are "bad" or unacceptable.

We don't choose these beliefs. We soak them up from our primary caregivers, our teachers, and from other influences (friends, relatives, the media, etc.), when we're too small to know any better. These beliefs become core components of the way we see ourselves, other people and the world. Some of these beliefs and generalizations give us outcomes and experiences we want, while others create outcomes and experiences we don't want.

This is critically important to your happiness, for two reasons. First, the brain is a goal seeking mechanism, and a very powerful one. Your brain can make whatever you put into it come true in your life. And second, human beings have a powerful need for consistency between what they believe to be true and what really is true. As has been said, people would rather be right than be happy.

...the brain is a goal seeking mechanism, and a very powerful one.

This means that regardless of how much what you believe is not representative of how things really are, or how much your beliefs result in misery for you, you will arrange to be right about them by creating the circumstances that seem to confirm that which you believe is true.

This is compounded by the fact that many beliefs you might have about yourself—since they involve something about you being "bad", "defective", "not okay", "broken", "unacceptable", and so on—are too painful to hold in your conscious awareness. For this reason they are repressed into your unconscious mind, where they still affect you, but are out of sight. Because of this, they are not available for conscious examination and change.

The other thing we do with these parts of ourselves we think are unacceptable is to project them onto others (this results in extreme emotional reactions to others who exhibit the characteristics we believe are "bad" or unacceptable in ourselves).

In many ways, emotional healing involves "unlearning" these old generalizations and making new, healthier ones. In reality, there is nothing about any of us that is innately bad. Since whatever you deeply believe comes true in reality, you could make a conscious choice to believe whatever would create a happy and peaceful life for yourself. Most people, however never take the reins and do this. Instead, they adopt the victim posture made so popular in the last few decades.

Meditation with Holosync facilitates this healing by making you more aware, more conscious of, repressed beliefs about yourself, and it does this in a way that, in most cases, takes all or part of the emotional charge off the negative and painful belief. If you'll remember, another of these principles described the fact that you cannot continue to do something harmful to yourself, and do it consciously. Only by remaining *unconscious* can a person continue to do something that is harmful to themselves.

...you could make a conscious choice to believe whatever would create a happy and peaceful life for yourself.

Most people evaluate beliefs by whether or not they are "true or false. If it's true, it's worth believing; if it's false, it isn't. In my opinion, this true/false distinction is not useful, despite the fact that it seems so obvious. The useful way to evaluate beliefs is by whether they are *resourceful* or *non-resourceful* for you—by whether they create happiness and peace, or something else. Since whatever you deeply believe comes true, the only resourceful beliefs are those that contain an outcome you want.

The big secret is that you can choose what you want to believe—you don't have to believe what seems true based on past experience. The first step is to find out what these unresourceful beliefs are. One way to begin to do this is to complete the following sentences:

I am _____. People are _____. The world is _____.

What we're looking for are the things you say to yourself when you're really down about things, when you're feeling the worst. We are not looking for what you learned in self help books—those things you think you should believe about yourself. We are not looking for "I am one with everything". "The world is filled with abundance". "People are basically good."

We're looking for what you *really do believe about yourself*, and say to yourself, about yourself, when things look darkest—things like "I'm never going to be a success". "No one will ever love me". "There's something wrong with me". "I can't seem to do anything right". "People will take advantage of you if you don't watch them very carefully". "Men always leave me in the end". "No one cares about me". "The world is dangerous and chaotic." And so on.

The big secret is that you can choose what you want to believe.

We're looking for those things you say to yourself when you are really down about everything. These statements are big clues to what negative core beliefs you have.

The second way to determine what these beliefs are is to look at what is happening in your life. Since what you believe manifests in reality, you can tell what a person believes just by looking at the results they are getting in their life. If you are having trouble sustaining a close relationship with the opposite sex, somewhere there is a core belief about yourself and about the opposite sex that is manifesting this result in your life. If you are having trouble with prosperity, or health, or any other issue, you must have a belief about that subject that is manifesting in what actually happens to you.

When you look at other people who are getting better results, you can be sure the difference is that they have different, and more empowering, core beliefs on that subject.

Once you identify your core beliefs (and, remember, we're concerned with the negative beliefs here—the positive ones, those that are giving you the results you want, don't need attention), the next step is to decide what beliefs you would need in order to create the results you want.

Once you know this, you can begin to install the new way of thinking about yourself.

To do this, you have to start telling yourself this new belief over and over, and wiping the old belief out of your mind whenever it pops up. The only reason the old belief seems true is that you have focused

on it so much, which makes it play out in reality, which of course makes you focus on it more, which makes it play out in reality more, and on and on.

Focus on this new belief. Think about it while meditating, while driving, while showering, etc. Doing so may bring up old and uncomfortable feelings, so be prepared for that—because you associate the old belief with safety, it will fight for its life. Don't let that bother you. Just keep focusing on what you want. Create a Technicolor movie of yourself, getting just what you want, and feeling happy and satisfied by it. The more vivid, and the more emotion you associate with it, the better. In addition to playing the movie during meditation, play it right before you go to sleep and right after waking up.

Most people who have had significant (negative) emotional experiences focus on what they don't want (i.e., a repetition of the significant emotional experience, such as abandonment). They have a rule: "avoid x" at all costs!" When you notice yourself focusing on what you do not want, change the focus to what you do want. Since your mind doesn't know when you focus on something that you do not want it (it always

When you notice yourself focusing on what you do not want, change the focus to what you do want.

takes whatever you focus on as an instruction to go get that something and bring it to you), focusing on what you do not want causes you to create more of it. To change your focus—which has been on automatic for a long time—takes practice, since the old way is automatic. Allow yourself to go through the learning curve, which may take a while.

As I said earlier, beliefs come true because we need consistency between what we believe and reality, and we will do anything to create this consistency. We create this consistency in three ways.

1) We get attracted to people and situations that confirm that the belief is true. For instance, you believe no one will ever really love you, which causes you to somehow feel a magical attraction to men/women who will leave, even though consciously you have no information about this aspect of who they are.

2) We hallucinate that the belief is true even if it isn't. For example, you interpret behaviors of potential partners as meaning that they will leave, are leaving, have left, etc., even if that is not what it really means. In other words, we put a meaning on whatever happens that causes it to confirm, in our minds, that the belief is true;

3) We act in such a way that people finally comply and act in the way we feared they would act. You fear they will leave, and, because of that fear, you act in such a way that finally causes the person to actually leave.

With all three, you get to be right about what you believe. But as they say, it's better to be happy than right.

Though changing beliefs can happen in an instant, in most cases the process of changing core beliefs can take several years to complete. Just identifying your core beliefs can take some time. Let it be okay that it takes time. Take it one step and one day at a time. Meditation with Holosync greatly speeds up this process, because it helps you become more conscious and aware of what you are creating, and it takes the emotional charge off things in your life and allows you to look at things from a more dispassionate perspective (this is the watcher I often talk about).

...anything you focus on...can happen for you.

However long this process takes, it is worth undertaking. Making this change defines the difference between being an unconscious automatic response mechanism, living out beliefs that create suffering, and a conscious being who chooses what to believe based on the kind of world they want to live in and creates a life that is happy, peaceful, full of stimulating creativity, and well worth living.

You are already an expert at creating what you believe and focus on. You may not have quite come to terms yet with the fact that anything you focus on and believe can happen for you. Most of what we focus on we did not choose. What we focus on was chosen for us when we were small and it runs on automatic. This is why I often refer to most people as being, for the most part, automatic response mechanisms.

Now, all you have to do is consciously change that focus to what you want and, since you're already good at getting what you focus on, once you learn to consciously direct that focus, you'll start getting what you want.

Once these unconscious generalizations about yourself have become conscious, and have been changed to reflect what you consciously choose for yourself, you are free.

Principle #9: The Neutral Universe

There is a Zen story of a great enlightened master who, upon hearing of his own master's death, began to cry uncontrollably. His followers were shocked to see him cry. "Why are you crying? You're enlightened. You're supposed to be beyond suffering. What will people think?"

He composed himself as best he could, and turning to them he said, "What can I do? My eyes are crying. They are so sad that they will never again see this teacher I loved so much."

As this story so poignantly points out, sorrow upon experiencing loss is a normal part of being human—even if we are an "enlightened" master and supposedly not subject to desires and attachments and the suffering they can create. The "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism point out that all life involves suffering; that suffering is caused by desire or attachment; and that suffering can be ended by giving up attachment; (the fourth Noble Truth is the method of doing so).

The Four Noble Truths are based on an obvious, often overlooked, but fundamental reality of human existence: all things exist "in time" and eventually pass away. It's pretty obvious that not getting what you want (or getting what you don't want) involves suffering, but it's equally true that getting what you want involves suffering. Why? Because the thing you wanted is, like everything else, transitory. This month you're Employee of the Month, but next month you aren't. You love playing with your baby daughter, but she will grow up. You are alive now, but someday you will die.

I vividly remember the first time I experienced this truth. I was four years old and my mother had bought me an ice cream cone. As I began licking the sweet and creamy ice cream off the top of the cone, I was in heaven. But when I'd eaten about half the ice cream, the realization hit me that this wonderful experience was going to end. While I certainly enjoyed the rest, the experience was definitely tainted by the fact that I knew the experience would soon be over. Even in the midst of my pleasure, I suffered.

As a conscious human being you give your world, and each event that happens, any and all the meaning it has.

The fact is, being overly attached to particular outcomes (like the ice cream cone lasting forever) causes pain and suffering. And yet, we are trained to believe that happiness is tied to specific events or, especially in our culture, to specific things. All around us are messages that connect positive emotions to things we do and own. The children playing with this year's hot toys are happy. The couple standing beside their new car are in love. The extended family sitting around the dinner table eating canned pasta sauce are united in their humor and affection. The woman just given the diamond is young and beautiful.

Because we live in a mass culture where meaning is centralized, we are used to having others interpret our lives for us. We have become passive observers of our own experience, waiting for other people to tell us what it means. Outside influences direct our attention to what we should care about and what we should strive for so often that the truth of our own power escapes us.

I want to suggest another idea. It's not original with me. It is basic to the transformational mystical teachings of most cultures (Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Zen, Native American, Sufi and others). Instead of believing that there is an absolute value and meaning to reality, a "reality code" that young people learn to decipher, I want you to consider an alternative view:

As a conscious human being you give your world, and each event that happens, any and all the meaning it has.

There is no intrinsic meaning to anything. In most cases, we did not consciously choose the meanings we give to things. Rather, they were taught to us, according to the conventions of our culture and our family, when we were too small to know any better. The great news is that we can consciously choose these meanings if we want to, and that, in fact, is just what people who are continually happy and peaceful have learned to do.

You are the creator of your own reality.

This means, of course, that you are the creator of your own reality. In contrast to how you may have been conditioned to think, you assign meaning and significance (for most people, based on unconscious programming) to what happens to you and then, based on that meaning, choose (again, usually unconsciously) what your response will be.

This principle has a corollary: you will be able to make wise and resourceful choices to the extent that you live consciously rather than unconsciously. If you have become an automatic response mechanism, unthinkingly adopting those responses chosen for you by your cultural, societal, family and species background, then your inner journey will be stalled. Your individuality and creativity will remain stillborn. What is more, you will spend a lot of time suffering.

If, on the other hand, you are able to wake up and become more aware of what moves and motivates you, you will see that you have picked up the paintbrush; you are painting the shapes of your feelings on that blank canvas. Because you are the artist and the author, you can paint anything you like. What you are painting is as ephemeral as anything else in life, but the lines you draw, the shapes you form, and the colors you choose are what give your life meaning. While we are all influenced by the cultural and

...the lines you draw, the shapes you form, and the colors you choose are what give your life meaning.

personal settings in which we live, some people are able to become independent artists who can express the dictates of their own heart, and some become proponents of schools run by others.

The implications of living this way as a conscious being are staggering. Here is one of them: since you create the world you inhabit, pain and suffering really can be optional. Only when you acknowledge your role in your life—and understand your own power—is there the possibility of improving your situation or creating a different story. If you see yourself as a passive character who is acted upon by (and then reacts to) external forces you can neither understand nor control, then you become a helpless victim.

Along with this idea of self-agency comes another one. What is, is. You have some ability to change what is, but there are real limits to what you can do. Your power instead comes from how you respond to what is, not from misguided attempts to control what is. How things are for you is, to a great extent, the product of how you feel about what is happening—and how you feel is the result of the meaning you have placed on what is happening.

And most of the time, if you are living with conscious awareness, you will be happy and peaceful because you have consciously placed a meaning on what is happening that creates happiness and inner peace.

It is a very interesting exercise to stop whenever you feel other than happy and peaceful and ask yourself what meaning you have placed on the people or events that seem to be causing your suffering, and then to consider what meaning you could give things that would allow you to be happy. Are you so attached to a meaning that causes suffering that you are unwilling to let it go and change it to one that creates happiness and peace? If so, that is your choice, but do realize that it is a choice, not something thrust upon you.

This new meaning (the one leading to happiness) is no more real or intrinsic to the situation than the first meaning (the one leading to suffering). This is, again, because nothing has any intrinsic meaning. But if you're going to place a meaning on what is happening, which would you want, the happiness meaning, or the unhappiness meaning? It's your choice, though most people don't realize it's a choice.

Conclusion

The idea that you could really choose to be happy and peaceful, may sound very utopian and unrealistic to you. Becoming conscious enough to notice when you are suffering, to notice what meaning you have placed on a situation, and to consciously change that meaning, does not come easily. Those who can do this have generally spent years meditating, or pursuing some other arduous spiritual practice, to gain this degree of conscious awareness. One of the incredible benefits to the Centerpointe program is that it creates this kind of awareness in those who use it, and does so in a relatively short period of time. Using Holosync offers you a view from a higher spot on the mountain, one allowing you to consciously make new and more resourceful choices.

When I first bring up this idea, that nothing has any intrinsic meaning, people often think I'm saying life is "meaningless." That's not at all what I'm saying. Whatever meaning your life has now, you created it, whether you realize it consciously or not. The people and situations of your life did not come pre-packaged with meaning. You placed these meanings on things in your life, based on programming you for the most part did not choose. If you're ecstatically happy with your life and the meanings all the things in it have for you, terrific. If not, you could give everything in your life any meaning you want, at any time.

If you find that hard to do, well, keep listening to those Holosync soundtracks, and the conscious awareness necessary to do so will come. I promise.

Resources

For more information about Centerpointe Research Institute and Holosync audio technology:
<http://www.myholosync.com/9principles-cri>.

To receive a FREE Holosync demo package: <http://www.myholosync.com/9principles-demo>.

For more information about Bill Harris's *Life Principles Integration Process* (from which the Nine Principles are taken) and to hear a free preview lesson:
<http://www.myholosync.com/9principles-lpip>