

Work Out Your

Own Salvation

How I healed a five - year - long headache

By E. F. Sagan

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**To all the weirdos in Bellingham, WA and Honolulu, HI who
helped me...
I am eternally grateful.**

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Chapter 1: Importance #1; B.M.S

(Body Mind Soul)

*Where do you think the headache is
coming from?*

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...” Philippians 2:12, NRSV

Baptized in a bed of tears and sweat, I emerged not free of sin, but with the entire world’s environmental sins laid on my shoulders. It was the reverse of a baptism. The weight was unbearable. I sunk deep into dark places of my psyche, and, it felt, into the psyche of all humans. I shuddered from my cold, wet face and body, or was it repulsion from the twisted backwardness of the world?

Like Neo, in *The Matrix*, I knew something wasn’t right in the world, but my psyche wasn’t ready for the Truth... wasn’t ready to be unplugged. Too late.

I got up and got a drink of water, looked for more blankets, and tried to go back to bed. It was around 1 am. “Is it over? Can I go to bed now? I’m really tired.” Just as I was about

to finally drift to sleep, another set of images and set of emotions came to terrorize me:

A small, black, oozing form wriggled on a cold beach far away. Sometimes it wriggled in pain. Sometimes it wriggled with the ferocity of a demon-possessed person. Sometimes it moved slowly, as if it was struggling while wiping itself against small rocks to go through the motions so that it could convince itself that it was trying its best.

Then I suddenly **felt** and **heard** a symphony of anxiety-producing tremolo strings ramping up quickly in pitch and volume with a screech, as in a horror movie, and as I had experienced with past reoccurring night terror nightmares. My heart seems to stop during these moments, and then race. I saw a zoomed-in image of the sad... no, *terrified* creature's eye. It was round and simple and pure black. It didn't ask me to help it, but to kill it to end its misery. The eye rolled back in its head.

The camera in my minds' eye zoomed out slowly. I saw a long nose... no, a black, wet beak. I saw feathers poking out of the black ooze completely surrounding it and the beach. It was a murre seabird! It was trying to fly! It tried to lift its wings, but the black goo, -oil- smothered it, and the high viscosity of the black gold acted like glue, preventing it from lifting its wings. It was as if there was an invisible hand squeezing the bird, stopping its wings from lifting up more than a few centimeters. Birds covered in oil, like Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims, feel a painful, horrible, unquenchable thirst for water. Today, people pour water onto statues in Japan, mouths open like oil-laden birds, hoping to give peace to souls caught up as collateral damage in our modern, ignorant world.

The Valdez Oil Spill on March 24th, 1989 introduced me to the idea of "sin" in the world, and kept me up crying at night for several years afterward.

I was seven years old.

16 Years Later

“So where do you think the headache is coming from?”

Funny, I thought, I've had this headache for 3 years and can't remember anyone asking me that! I've had lots of people tell me, "Oh well you just got to try this..." or "You must be doing this wrong", or "Try this, I heard this works"... Everybody always has been quick to give me advice; some of it was helpful... People love to give advice... but people don't like to listen...how can it be that nobody asked for my opinion? That's so...smart... so... touching of her.

“E?..”

“Oh yeah.. I uhh..don't know...”. I stared at my reflection in the bus window and watched a tear roll down slowly, trying to hide it from my healer friend, Sunny, embarrassed at how touched I always feel near her.

“I have always brought the world's environmental problems onto my shoulders like they are my fault. It could be something to do with feeling pain for the environment. I don't know. But I have no idea how to get rid of *that*! It's sorta become who I am!”

The tremolo strings started low and screeched high,
rrrrRRRREEEEEEGH!!!

I blinked...

Bad mistake...

I saw a black-hooded figure nailed to a cross, blood dripping down; grey and white powerful waves crashing in the background. Was it an Abu Ghraib war prisoner being tortured by ignorant cogs in the war machine; hands extended outward, pleading? No. The image zoomed in. It was a seagull dripping with black oil, beak lifted up, cracked slightly open, pleading to die, pleading for water.

We were using oil that second, travelling in a dirty bus, spitting out black soot. **I am the invisible, choking hand! I am the**

crucifier! I have become death, the destroyer of worlds! I am human!

Yup. Still there, all these years later, I thought.

Don't worry, ego, your identity is secure.

Chapter 2: Importance #20; BM

I sought professional medical help

Three Years Earlier...

In 2002, at the start of the Headache which I eventually would grow to endearingly call, “My Bunion in the Brain”, I sat in the Western Washington University campus doctor’s office in Bellingham, WA, like a stinky elephant in a room with dreadlocks down to the half of my back. I didn’t know I was stinky and dirty, but I was. I smiled at a nearby exchange student, and they turned their head and averted their eyes. *We don’t have stinky elephants with dreads in our country...unsure how to proceed... best not to make eye contact with the beast in case it signals a challenge,* they thought.

I sat and waited the usual, long amount of time and finally a large, old doctor came in and said something quickly like this with his voice and body language, “I’m Doctor Mumble, and I don’t have time to talk to you, and would rather not shake your hand. What’s your problem?”

“Well, thanks for asking doc! I have a sore throat, an itchy head, the worst headache I’ve ever felt behind my right eye that

started a few weeks ago after I smoked marijuana for the first time and pulled an all-nighter, and I overpronate and am wondering if I should get some inserts for my shoes”.

I hate all these damn hippies on this campus. They have so many issues, he probably thought

“Look, I don’t have time to treat a laundry-list of problems. You will have to make a separate appointment for each issue. Let’s focus on the hair. I’m concerned you have lice.” he said.

“Most-likely sir.” I said, probably in the voice of Ace Ventura. “I hear Bob Marley had 32 new species that he lived in harmony with until he died. The lice is my least concern. I kind of like them actually, they are my friends. I’m happy to be in a little pain in order to support a colony of life.”

I smiled a characteristically large smile, that combined with the hair, gave me less of a stinky-elephant-look, and more of a lion, or Cheshire-cat-look.

Doctor Mumble squinted with disgust and disbelief and looked like he was about to puke as he put on some lice-impenetrable latex gloves. He started sifting through my dirty, unwashed dreads which had to be daily back-combed and mixed with wax to counteract my naturally-detangling Scandinavian hair. He said, “But you’ve got to think about other *people*. They most-likely don’t feel the way you do, and *don’t* want lice, so you’ve got to respect their desires. Lice spreads easily. It is not a pet. It is an infestation which could spread across this whole campus if you don’t take care of it now!”

The fact that he said that most people don’t think like me only further empowered my ego in its uniqueness and further made me feel like I was right and knew something about righteousness that most people didn’t know, like my environmental passions.

“Ahh yes, doc, that is a great point, the ol’ ‘you’re right to swing your fist ends when it is an arm’s length from my face’. That is a layman’s paraphrasing of several great philosophers I’m

learning about now in liberal arts; philosophers like Rousseau, Fichte, Kant etcetera. Great people. I love them. So I looked into it, and contrary to popular opinion, lice cannot *jump*. They *can* however, be seen to move a distance of up to three feet due to electrostatic forces, but that is very rare. They mostly spread by direct contact. I don't have a girlfriend so all I have to do to follow the ethics of great thinkers is not touch people, and preferably keep a three-foot distance, which in combination with feeling the cute little suckers suck from the teat of my nutritious scalp, is a small price to pay for the care and sustenance of a whole colony of divine beings."

"*Divine* beings?" he asked incredulously (maybe my grandmother is right, I *thrive* on feeling weird).

"Yes, I believe all life is sacred. Don't you? That's one of the things which keeps me up at night; the fact that every species is like a unique voice in a beautiful symphony and chorus of life, and yet every fifteen minutes another species goes extinct because *we* think we are *better* than them. I even have a friend who went to Africa and got a tsetse fly to lay eggs on him, and instead of having it 'cured', meaning 'murdered', he allowed his body to nurture the cute flies and witnessed their birth. He said it was the closest thing he will ever experience to being a mother. I think I'd like to try that sometime, but in the meantime I am Lice Mother."

The smiling, crazy lion looked at the grumpy, old medical doctor and didn't understand why he was so grumpy. ~Awkward pause~

"Well, you definitely have lice", he said with a snap of his gloves into the waste container. I sort-of relished the fact that I was so dirty that people had to wear protection to touch me, like I was the essence of Mother Earth's dirt or something. He continued, "I strongly encourage you to take this prescription and undergo lice treatment and think about it more."

"As for the headaches, no, they probably weren't caused by marijuana. If anything, marijuana would help them. It sounds

like a tension or cluster headache, but the medication usually produces more unpleasant side-effects than the alleviation of the headache. Try varying doses of over-the-counter drugs like ibuprofen, Tylenol, and for when they are extremely painful, try Excedrin.”

“They *are* extremely painful, like the most pain I’ve ever been in, man”. *I should probably tell him more, but he seems in a hurry. At least we are in agreement philosophically that Western medicine always robs Peter to pay Paul.*

“Then try Excedrin when it is the worst”, he said.

But what if it is the “worst” all the time? I can barely hear him or walk without stumbling and I dare not take off my sunglasses. It’s like there is a constant siren in my head. It’s like I am in the garbage compactor in Star Wars and I’m continually being crushed. I hate it! I can’t live like this! If it weren’t for the lice depending on me, I’d think about ending my life! This is no way to live! I am a shell of a person, not a real person. I am the shadow of who I used to be. I am a zombie, stumbling around without awareness of life, only a vague memory of it. I’m looking for brains, a good brain that doesn’t hurt all the time...

Chapter 3: Importance #2: BMS

Sleep!

You can imagine that my Mom worried about me a lot. One of the things Mother always said, which I wish I would have just learned the easy way instead of the hard way, is “Make sure you always get enough sleep!” Perhaps if I just listened to that one bit of advice, the Bunion in the Brain crazy headache would have never even come. It really did come on Jan 8th, 2002 after pulling an all-nighter in college. I really did just smoke weed for the first time a few days before that, and I had blamed myself and friends for that and felt really guilty. But now that I look back on it, it was more triggers of *guilt* and *blame* and *lack of sleep* than anything.

The key word in “Make sure you always get enough sleep!” is the word “always”. Scientific studies have recently showed that one night of very low sleep throws the body off-balance for two weeks. It takes two weeks of good sleep to recover! If that is true, then I doubt that I or hardly any college students ever live in an optimal state of physical, mental, and even spiritual health.

Sleep is needed for the body. Most animals have evolved to require sleep as a way of repairing muscles from the day's

excursions, aid digestion, and a host of psychological reasons. Recent studies have shown that lack of sleep increases depression (which is already a high risk for sufferers of chronic pain, such as a chronic headache), increases appetite, and many risks, such as diabetes and future heart problems, and even cancer and bone problems! Sleep deprivation has even been seen to *change 700 genes*! We scientists, have, in the past, thought of genes as solely the inheritance mechanism, and think of them as fairly trust-worthy and unchangingly static, like a hard-drive. We are now shocked to see a whole recent field of research which shows environmental factors affecting and *changing* genes, and how they express themselves. This is generally called “epigenetics”. See the reference section at the end of the book. Email me if you would prefer it if I list references within each chapter, but I find it can be distracting. I purposely put the title of each referenced article so that it is easy to scan and find the article and scientific study that you are most-interested in.

Are you surprised that I have matured into a full-fledged, respected research scientist with a Ph.D. in chemistry after such a strange, hippy past? This metamorphosis will actually be seen throughout this book!

Ok, I can get that sleeping is important for the body. I can get that it is important for the mind. Some studies on super-smart neural-net computer programs which work in a similar fashion to human brains seem to show that even neural-net computer programs dream. One of my favorite movies is “Blade Runner”, which is based on the book “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?”, and the unbelievable thing... is that... yes, they do! Highly advanced neural-net computers dream! They spit out random bits of information they had learned or seen earlier that day, perhaps to better process and organize it. You can imagine that this is even more important for human mental health than it is for a computer’s. Studies have also shown that the popular “cramming” that college students do the night before a test is not effective in the long-term, and that having a healthy amount of

sleep is one of the best things you can do to learn and remember effectively.

What about spirit? Well, if you believe in that sort of thing, like most people do, you don't have to look far in any religion to see that many people believe that God and other spiritual entities can communicate to people while sleeping. If there is less sleep, there is less contact with the Divine (Divine with a capital "D", not lower-case, as in the case of divine lice.).

Tibetan monks have had their brains scanned during meditation, and have found that they have much higher gamma wave brain activity; activity associated with well-being, and notions of self-identity, and happiness. The activated regions of the brain are also the same regions which become attacked and weakened during Alzheimer's. These high gamma levels usually take hours to reach while sleeping. If you only get two hours of sleep, you are not reaching this Mental (and what could perhaps be described as 'Spiritual') Oasis of the mind... well, unless you are a badass Tibetan Monk who meditates all day, then you pretty-much live in bliss all the time if you do it right.

If you only get 6 hours of sleep, you might touch it here and there briefly, but not as satisfyingly. Of course, every person is different. My mom and I notice that my body and mind actually prefer ten hours of sleep! I naturally wake up after ten hours! It is kind of fun, but annoying when you have a lot to do. Other people are completely rested after six, and will naturally wake up after six, even on a vacation. Of course, the average person should perhaps follow Sir Thomas More's advice in his 1516 book, "Utopia" which was based on classic philosophers, such as Plato: "Spend six hours a day working, eight sleeping, and the rest as you wish", (paraphrased) so yes, it has been known for a long time that eight hours is ideal.

I ranked "sleep" at #3 in importance for my particular headache! My dad says he gets a headache every time he gets too much sleep or too little sleep. It would appear to be the same with me. Sleep is a trigger to take seriously. Just because you

don't have to pay \$20 per pill doesn't mean it has no value and shouldn't be taken like a prescription! As you will see, throughout my journey, I slowly relaxed my ego, slowly relaxed on my exceptionalism, and I eventually cut off my dreads and poisoned my lice friends, even though it pained me to do so; I relaxed my morals and sense of righteousness, and slowly learned the importance of taking care of myself. I wanted to help others, and for some reason it took me a long time to realize that I had to first take-care of myself. It seems so obvious now. I now put my health above all else.

What is the point of being a billionaire, if you are bedridden or suffer from a debilitating, chronic headache? What is the point of winning Mom-of-the-Year or Dad-of-the-Year, or getting that promotion, or whatever the excuse is for not going to bed at a reasonable time if it makes our body-mind-soul miserable?

As I pondered these things for five years, I noticed I slowly stopped making excuses for not sleeping and slowly reorganized my life around an absolute minimum requirement for sleep. I don't think it was only a coincidence that my improvement in sleep was correlated with my slow improvement of my headache.

The Sandman says, "Come to the Mind Oasis my friend. It is prepared just for you every day. I am your best councilor, your Energy Replenisher, your Cancer Shield, your Heart Relaxer, your Muscle Rebuilder, your Gamma connection to Spirit and Wholeness, your Friend. Just because you live in a capitalistic society which has programmed you to only place value on things in proportion to their price, as Marx predicted, doesn't mean that sleeping has no value because it is free. I am the best free doctor you will ever meet!"

Hmmm. I didn't know Sandman reads Marx, I thought. I talk to myself and let my imagination run rampant. I'm sorta crazy in that way. Do other people do that?

Chapter 4; Importance #22; B

I need to drink enough water

Basically, what I just said in chapter 3, can be applied here, “Listen to yo Mamma!”. I don’t want to get into lots of details, and have no interesting stories to share with water, other than I’ve always been a person who has enjoyed drinking lots of water and have found it to help alleviate the average headache. For my Bunion in the Brain, crazy 5-year-long headache, however, it was deeper than just water, but still, nonetheless something worth experimenting with, as far as optimum glasses of water per day goes.

Actually, two quick stories:

1) I’ll go into it in more detail in Ch 31, but basically, a nutritionist told me that it is a mistake for health-nuts like me to be so freaked out about sodium intake. Sure, the average American who lives off of too much McDonalds and salty chips consumes too much salt, which increases blood pressure, and heart problems, but from my experience, I’d say the average vegan or vegetarian or someone who is remotely health-conscious consumes *too little electrolytes (salt)*. I therefore, tried to eat more bananas (potassium) and stopped passing on the salt, and started to feel slightly better.

2) My wife told a MD that she had been struggling with headaches while pregnant with our first son, and the doctor said confidently, "That is because the body is requiring more liquids, so you need to drink 1.5 to 2X more than you were before." My wife replied, "Well, I drink almost a gallon a day normally, so... I need to drink 1.5 to 2 gallons of water now?". Believe it or not, a confident "yes" was the answer. This is unfortunately, a weakness that some medical doctors have. Many doctors of *philosophy*, such as myself, who concern ourselves with underlying causes prefer to think deeper and sometimes egotistically and derisively call doctors "elevated plumbers", which isn't very nice. Well, sometimes truth isn't nice.

You see, medical doctors have to think in terms of statistics all the time, which is usually a great, and scientifically-preferred way of navigating the world. So the doctor sort of just regurgitated a cute and catchy 1.5X rule which she told all young mothers. It probably works great for 9/10 mothers, or maybe even 99/100! My wife is quite the extreme when it comes to drinking water- one of those type of weird, cute, eccentricities that husbands love about their unique partner... or learn to love. My wife almost died from heat stroke while trying to raise awareness for immigrants who die crossing deserts in Arizona, and since then she is especially sensitive to heat, and drinks lots of water. It has probably become a psychological crutch and dependency.

I don't mind though. I'm not going to give her grief over her addictions and vices of water and chocolate. They are quite harmless- most people would be lucky (including myself!) to have such innocent vices!

Suffice to say, she likes to drink a ridiculous amount of water. Here's where a plumber and a philosopher of science can be separated: a scientist will go by the statistical chances just as much... except in the highly exceptional cases... then we will pause and say "Hmmm, that is highly unusual, so the usual cute 1.5X rule might not apply... let me think more about this". We

realize that the ‘general rules’ are probably only good if you fit within one standard deviation of being perfectly “average” (a case which, by the way, doesn’t exist). So that means, roughly 68% of people can fit into ‘rule of thumb’ type recommendations, but the very significant rest of us are highly unique.

This is why I am excited about the future of medicine- it is going in the direction of individualized healthcare. In the very near future, every health insurer will gladly pay \$1000 for you to get a detailed DNA scan to let future doctors know your unique disease risks, and how you will uniquely respond to drugs, even drugs which haven’t been invented yet; how cool is that? I’m hoping that in 100 years my book here will lose all purpose, except as entertainment, or spiritual guidance because in the future, you can just get your cheek swabbed, and see what kind of genetic predispositions you have for pharmaceutical reactions and diseases, and get a therapy recommended *just for you*. So one day you will get a drug which *will* heal your headache based on your unique genetic disposition. Or perhaps there will be more and more improvements to the fairly new (and much less scary) version of “shock-therapy” where (now) very low doses of electricity or magnetic flux can be applied to very specific parts of the brain to alleviate depression, addiction, schizophrenia, and, in the case of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), the FDA has recently even approved it as a therapy for headaches! This document will become obsolete because technology and health therapies will continue to increase exponentially. I can hope at least.

Long story short: my wife listened to the doctor and the headaches got worse. She listened to me, and increased her electrolyte dosage by eating bananas, and drinking Gatorade and Pedialyte, and her headaches (thank goodness) completely went away!

Know that *most* people drink less than 8 glasses of water and need to drink more... but it *is* possible to drink *too much*

water, believe it or not. You pee out electrolytes faster than you replenish them if you drink too much... so you need to boost the electrolytes when you boost pure water past 8 cups a day. I sometimes get a headache after running for an hour in the Summer in dry Colorado, so I just make sure I drink lots of water. But I don't *only* think about water, like most headache-remedies say, I *also* keep in mind the balancing act involving electrolytes! But don't researchers say that water is better than Gatorade? Yes, but that is also black-and-white, either-or thinking. I'm not saying replace *all* water with Gatorade or Pedialyte... just see it as an important supplement. It is worth experimenting with for any headache-sufferer, with the (hopefully) proper guidance of a medical professional who sees you as a unique individual, not just a statistic.

The problem with sports drinks is all the sugar, so don't forget the natural stuff too. There's lots of interesting concoctions online, and I personally like coconut water, orange juice, pickles (some NFL athletes drink pickle juice before a game... a large amount sounds dangerous to me though), and lemonade or water with lemons. I noticed after I donated plasma that they give me an IV of sodium citrate or citric acid afterward. It is for anticoagulation of the blood, but I also notice it in rehydration drinks and lemonade, and even in World Health Organization and UNICEF recommendations for oral rehydration drinks for the many children worldwide dying from dehydration due to diarrhea...so I wonder if it has some rehydration properties as well, but I'm having a hard time finding any research consensus on this. Drinks with citric acid *have* been clearly found to decrease the likelihood of developing kidney stones.

I got to laugh... you will see (soon- in Ch 12) that WSU students, who are experts in drinking alcohol, and therefore curing hangovers, knew *back in 2003* that Pedialyte is "*the best hangover cure ever, dude! Bro!*" excitedly says the fratboy. Just now, in 2015, *twelve years later*, I read that Pedialyte has finally

noticed that a huge % of sales (30%) are coming from adults, especially in college towns, and have put two and two together.

So this once “baby-only” company is now in an awkward position of both advertising cute, cuddly pictures of babies for responsible mothers and fathers *and* advertising to irresponsible frat boys and sorority girls and binge-drinking college students! How will that look...?... a baby on the front bottle being fed by Zach Galifianakus in neon shades while drinking a beer bong of Pedialyte? Pedialyte bong? Is that a *thing* yet? I digress... but you see that if Pedialyte helps serious hangover headaches, it (in addition to lots of separate glasses of pure water) *might* just be a magic bullet for some other headache sufferers too!

Chapter 5; Importance #43; B

Experimenting with over the counter remedies

After leaving Dr. Mumble's office, still a bit shocked that he really *did* say, "I don't have time to help you with a laundry-list of problems", I immediately bought lots of Excedrin, ibuprofen, and Tylenol. I wasn't quite ready to delouse my entire room, my clothes, cut off my dreads, and poison my friends on my head. That day eventually did come as I slowly agreed that a lice infestation throughout Western Washington University (WWU) would bring greater total suffering to the world than the total benefit that it would bring to the parasitic animals. *I guess I don't really like parasites*, I thought. *They remind me too much of humans.*

I went straight for the maximum dose of Excedrin, because he said that is what to use for the worst headaches, and like I said, it *was* the worst headache imaginable.

After a few hours, I actually noticed an improvement! The headache didn't go away, it was reduced by maybe 50% or so... still worse-feeling than any "normal" headache I had in the past, but manageable- I was able to remember 2/10 of the chemical reactions I had to learn each week while studying

Organic chemistry, instead of 0/10 or 1/10...one depressing thought is that without the headache, I could probably memorize all 10/10 without much effort.

The greatest benefit of the Excedrin came to my morale.

Oh thank God! It is treatable! Maybe if it decreases a bit this week it will decrease more next week and I'll be headache-free and happy and normal again and able to study Organic Chemistry and actually remember things by the end of the month! That would be great!

I looked into the mirror in my dorm to speak directly to Satan or whatever devils were haunting me. I was a very religious Christian Evangelical at the time, believe it or not. The mirror always represented a gateway to evil spirits to me because of various weird "Bloody Mary" games I used to play as a kid where you chant "Bloody Mary" and look for the ghost of "Bloody Mary" in the mirror. It was really stupid.

"You may think that you have beat me devil but you never will! You have sent this headache to defeat me for being a follower of Jesus," I said seriously, voice raising, "but I **bind** you in the name of Jesus Christ. In the most Holy Name of the Most Holies I bind you to Hell! You will have no foothold on my soul or head again! Be Gone! I cast you out in the name of Jesus Christ! I will not drop out of college from this stupid headache! I will not let it control me! I will prevail because I have all of God's holy angels on my side fighting you! I laugh at you for your pitiful attempt to break me! Ha-ha-ha! Stupid Mother F*r Devil!"

I didn't realize at the time that I probably looked completely insane, standing, yelling, and shouting to myself in the mirror, no less superstitious than I was as a child playing Bloody Mary. Little did I know, there *were* no devils in my mind other than my own guilt, my own messed up psyche. The devil was *me*!

Little did I know, it wasn't a host of angels making me feel better, but the result of the very field of chemistry that I studied, or attempted to study.

After a week of nonstop Excedrin doses, the headache came back to its original intensity... then it got worst! After enjoying a week, living with hope and "God on my side" and thinking that everything was going to work out in a month...after a week of not 'fake-smiling' but genuinely smiling... reality started to sink in.

I laid sprawled out on an uncomfortable, small couch with thin, stiff, crinkly cushions; my legs sticking out. After midnight or so when my roommate went to sleep I would almost daily close the door to not disturb him, and study Organic Chemistry by myself in the small communal living room/kitchen that we shared with other suitemates so that I could have the lights on. He would often find me there, asleep, missing some classes in the morning, after accidently falling asleep while studying. I wasn't very productive past midnight, but in some ways more-so because with a headache as a major distraction, (I noticed that I was easily distracted during the day because the headache was impossible to ignore), I ended up preferring night time because it was quiet, with nobody to distract me further. I would pull on my hair to try to help my headache feel better, and out of exasperation as well, and then it would often fall out and I would lay the hair in my large Organic Chemistry book and use them as book marks. Pages with lots of hair sticking out were difficult sections. Pages with a low amount of hair meant that those sections were easy, or review from past material that I remembered well before my mind became hijacked.

So much for my month timeline...this headache is here with me to stay for a long time. The Devil has more than a foothold. The Devil is winning... I ... must ... keep ... fighting ... keep ... studying ... to ... prove ... him ... wrong...

Chapter 6; Importance # 42; B

Experiment with caffeine

I gave up on Excedrin and after a week or so, the headache went back to its usual nastiness instead of nastiness X2. I then experimented with the ibuprofen and Tylenol, and they seemed to literally have no effect at all, so I gave up on over-the-counter (OTA) remedies completely. I know they work well for many “normal” headaches, but this was a completely new animal, something which had medical doctors scratching their heads, and evangelical faith-healers and exorcists as well. Speaking in tongues can be a pretty impressive (or scary) party-trick, but it didn’t seem to have any effect on my headache.

One day, I looked at the package of Excedrin and was surprised to see caffeine as a main active ingredient. I shouldn’t have been surprised though, because I then remembered that my sister occasionally suffers from migraines (mostly triggered by stress for her) and had taken Excedrin and had told me how doctors and friends have told her that caffeine, in appropriate doses, can help. After my experience with the “Rebound Headache” I realized with a bit more wisdom that the word “appropriate” is key.

Most druggies know that dosage is key, whether they are prescription, white-collar druggies dealing with psychological problems and prescription drugs, or street junkies. Society might look at certain groups of people more favorably than others, but the chemistry of the human body doesn't discriminate.

So I experimented with caffeine, mostly taking it in coffee. This time, I did it smarter, by starting with a very small amount, less than a cup a day, and slowly ramping up to an optimal level. I have found that for me, about 2 cups of coffee is best. Sometimes, I will dilute it to stretch it throughout the day, so I'm not tempted to have 5 cups.

It helped! Not much...maybe just a 10% reduction, not a 50% reduction, but just enough to be noticeable. I considered it just another tool in the toolkit with multifaceted strategies that I needed to chip away at my problem. As you can imagine, at this point of my life, basically hitting rock-bottom, depressed, hopeless, feeling like each day was a battle, each day was pointless, and I would never get better... even a 10% reduction gave me a 100% improvement in attitude. I felt like Pandora, and I had opened a box of all the evils of the world into my life, but luckily I didn't let out despair... so I could still hope, and that is what kept me alive. I did more research into caffeine and this is what I found:

Coffee is one of the most-traded commodities on the planet, and the caffeine it contains is by far the most-popular psychoactive drug taken throughout the world. It is a very powerful chemical which has several effects on the body. It is a diuretic (makes you pee) and laxative (makes you poop)... or is it? Some studies suggest it is only a diuretic at > 5 cups a day, and recent research suggests that drinking an equivalent of 1-2 cups of coffee a day does not have a dehydrating effect on the body, or much of a diuretic effect. It is thought to act as a laxative only because it speeds up the peristalsis of the colon, which is the movement the colon does to move food through the digestive

system. So in excess, it can make you poop too fast, and not absorb enough water from your food and can have a dehydration-effect, which we've talked about as a thing to avoid.

However, the *main* thing to remember about caffeine is that it is a powerful stimulant and affects the *brain*, so that is the aspect one should focus on regarding caffeine. It effectively has the main end-result of stimulating the mind, and causing the brain to work faster, making us feel "more alert" and helping us "wake up". It makes it easier for calcium ions to shuttle back and forth throughout all the neurons, so it's kind of like using new gold wires to transfer electricity, instead of rusty copper wires, where electricity travels slower. The other important effect it has on the brain is a *vascular* (veins, arteries, capillaries) effect. In small, regular doses (like drinking 1-2 cups of coffee a day) it acts as a vasoconstrictor, meaning that it constricts veins, arteries, etc.

The reason why caffeine can be helpful for some headaches, especially migraines, is that sometimes the pain of the headache is caused from veins, arteries, and capillaries becoming dilated, the opposite of constricted. They can then swell so large as to put pressure on nerves, and you may know that pressure on nerves *really hurts*. Whether it's back pain, hitting your thumb with a hammer, cutting yourself, or even certain headaches, the pain is caused by pressure providing a stimulus to nerves which our brain then interprets as pain so that we can avoid the danger, and keep ourselves safe. Evolutionarily, it is ancient wisdom telling us, "Ok- you can stop running now, this hurts!" or "stay away from fire- that hurts!", or "do something about that cut, quick!"

Specifically, a migraine (and many headaches) start with something minor, like a lack of sleep, water, or even a thought, and that causes pain and inflammation in a region of the brain. The brain then sends chemicals to decrease the pain. Unfortunately, these chemicals also often act as *vasodilators* which swell the nearby blood vessels, putting further pressure on nerves, and further pain.

This probably evolved a long time ago, when our ancestors didn't have very large brains, and so the main benefit of the vasodilation, the increased blood vessels led to increased healing of that damaged region. Unfortunately, now we still have that old technology in our body which is great for the rest of our body, but not very helpful in our brains.

Since the original stimulus slowly starts inflating our vessels in our brain, a headache can actually feel the process of it intensifying. So if someone says, "I have a headache starting" with an ominous feeling that it is about to get worse... they are right! If someone says, "My headache is spreading", chemically and physically, they are right! The sensations and words we use to describe the start and spread of a headache is actually quite true to what is happening... an unfortunate chain reaction: a small stimulus causes a small pain in a small area -> the body sends chemicals to numb the pain -> that also swells vessels, putting more pressure surrounding that original 'seed' -> more chemicals are sent to that original area, and now surrounding area -> repeat -> repeat... the effected region intensifies in pressure and pain, and spreads.

Caffeine helps put a monkey wrench in this crazy cycle by constricting the blood vessels. Yay! We are saved! Our brains might have gotten too large for our own good. Our old chemical technology in our evolved body, hasn't adapted yet to having a large and advanced brain, but at least the brain has been smart enough to rummage around fields and find cacao beans, notice helpful properties, and then plant them! But is it a miracle drug?

Unfortunately, no. I wish. As I said, it was worth it for me to experiment with carefully, and I have found 2 cups of coffee a day to be helpful, or to use a run to Starbucks or local latte stand as an excuse here and there to stop a small headache from turning into a large one, but as I learned, it is possible to overdo and that gets you into worse problems. Once you understand the chemical and physical chain-reaction effect of many headaches, you will understand why doctors recommend to take caffeine or

radically change your current environment *immediately* after feeling the first inkling of a headache. Especially since you can overdo prescriptions and caffeine, it is much better to catch it early so that it may stop fairly soon, than catch it late, tempting you to overuse the medication...you don't want a headache to go on non-stop for five years...trust me!

The next chapter explains why you don't want to overdo some medications, especially caffeine. Then, I will be almost finished with the technical stuff, and it will be back to funny true stories. Most of my headache was psychosomatic (the Mind effecting the Body), so most of my therapy had to deal with the interesting intersections of Mind-Body-Spirit.

Chapter 7; Importance #41; B

Beware of the Rebound Headache!

So I went from being bedridden in pain, unable to do anything or go out of the dark when the headache first started, to slow, and constant improvement, to accelerated improvement from Excedrin, back to being bedridden for a few days. What happened? It is called a “Rebound Headache”. For most people, a certain medication, such as caffeine, can be so effective as to make the headache completely vanish, and then, due to overuse, it comes back with a vengeance, causing a new headache, which some people call a “Rebound Headache”. For me, it didn’t go away, so grammatically, it doesn’t really deserve a title as “rebound headache” because it was really just the same headache, and just went from less-intense to more-intense.

I’ll provide a quote here from a 2010 paper I really like (partly because it is free and online) by Echeverri et al. which appeared in the International Journal of Vascular Medicine, and then I’ll summarize it in laymen’s terms. I’ll include a fairly lengthy segment for all the science (like me) geeks out there, so

don't feel guilty if you just want to skim it if that's not interesting or helpful for you:

“Caffeine, by competitively blocking the adenosine receptors, increases its plasmatic concentration [64] which increases its systemic effects. At a systemic level, adenosine stimulates the chemoreceptor distributed throughout the circulation, causing a generalized increase in sympathetic tone, with an increase in circulating catecholamines, peripheral vascular resistance, and renin secretion [44, 65]. Several studies have documented an increase in systolic arterial pressure of 6 to 7.5 mmHg and 2.6 to 4 mmHg in diastolic pressure 60 minutes after the administration of 300 mg of caffeine (equivalent to drinking a triple espresso) [18, 43].

In spite of this “indirect” vasoconstrictor effect produced by caffeine, it is important to point out that the chronic consumption of caffeine creates a tolerance to its adenosine receptor-dependent effects. Chronic blocking of the adenosine receptors, inducing “upregulation” (an increase in the number and sensitivity) of the receptors has been described with a low-moderate caffeine consumption (approximately two cups of coffee for more than 5 days) [66]. A meta-analysis carried out in 1999 [67] described an increase in the systolic and diastolic arterial pressure (2.4 and 1.2 mmHg, resp.) with the chronic consumption of 5 cups of coffee a day, on average, which is a considerably lower value from that obtained in studies carried out on subjects who are not caffeine consumers.

This “up-regulation” generates the “abstinence syndrome” described by Griffiths in 1988 [68], characterized by headache, fatigue, flushing, and anxiety. When you abruptly stop the consumption of caffeine in a habitual consumer, there is a greater number of available adenosine receptors, which

potentiates the vasodilation produced by adenosine, causing the symptoms [59, 69, 70].

It has been asserted that the predominant cardiovascular effects of caffeine occur at the adenosine receptors because much lower concentrations are required (nM) than those used in studies that show their effect on Ca^{2+} and phosphodiesterase (mM), which are concentrations that are not attained in vivo [71]. However, in our in vitro studies which were carried out with micromolar (μM) concentrations of caffeine there was a significant vasodilator effect (approximately 75%) at human consumption concentrations [46]. In vitro studies do not evaluate the systemic response to caffeine, and therefore it is not clear yet which one of the mechanisms of action predominates in vivo, given that there are various factors that affect its metabolism and its effects.

6.1.1. Caffeine in Relation to Migraine Type Headaches

Migraines are irregular and episodic which is why there is no specific explanation for why a migraine occurs at any given time. In general it is supposed that exposure to certain environmental factors combined with individual internal factors causes migraine episodes. There are reports that certain dietary, physical, hormonal, emotional, and environmental factors trigger or cause migraine episodes. Those most frequently reported include stress, alcohol, foods, excess or lack of sleep, and weather conditions.

Headaches (migraine) may be related to caffeine consumption due to its removal from the usual diet, causing an abstinence syndrome: an alteration in the normal functioning of the nervous system. The mechanism by which this occurs is a blocking of the adenosine receptors; when there is an excessive release of adenosine there is a response in which the release of neurotransmitter molecules, such as serotonin, noradrenaline,

acetylcholine, and dopamine, is inhibited, causing an imbalance that can be seen in the symptoms associated with migraines [72]

There is no clear conclusion that migraines can be caused by caffeine. Adenosine has opposite effects depending on its site of action; centrally, in the brain and spinal cord, adenosine acts as an analgesic, but peripherally it can cause pain. Adenosine dilates blood vessels in the head and neck. The concentration of adenosine in the head and neck increases approximately 68% above normal concentrations during migraine episodes, causing vasodilation and pain [73].

The nervous system compensates the interference of caffeine by releasing more adenosine, increasing the number of adenosine receptors in the neuron surface, increasing the affinity of these receptors and decreasing the rate at which adenosine molecules are removed. All these changes tend to increase the activation of adenosine receptors, to compensate the receptors occupied by caffeine.

Caffeine is also a common ingredient in many medications used for treating migraines, due to the fact that it makes analgesics work more efficiently, causes a faster absorption, and allows for a reduced dosage which decreases possible side effects of certain analgesics.”

Fewwww! That was intense. You might have caught some of what I mentioned earlier regarding its effect on calcium ions and the “chain-effect” phenomenon. What does this have to do with a Rebound Headache? Well, a Rebound Headache is caused from overuse of a headache medicine, especially a pain medication, and it is similar to what was described above, when a regular consumer of coffee suddenly stops all caffeine intake and gets a withdrawal headache.

Long story short, your body actually physically changes in response to the frequent use of something like caffeine... your cells in your brain literally grow more receptors on cells in your brain, like weeds in a garden after lots of rain, they just pop up everywhere. With all the extra receptors, that is going to cause the absorption and concentration of chemicals in the brain to change. The body, and each cell is pretty amazing in its ability to adapt. It can adapt to a certain point, but after that point, certain chemicals (etc.) get out of balance, which then can give you a headache, or increase the likelihood of one or worsen the body's response to one.

Put another way, following the weed analogy, your brain is a garden. You've got to feed it, and it will adapt to what you feed it. If you feed it caffeine, it's sort-of like feeding it fertilizer and lots of rain, and so weeds (receptors) will pop up everywhere. As long as you keep supplying it with lots of water and fertilizer, the weeds will keep spreading. It's ok to mess with your brain a little bit. It can probably take a regular dosage of 1-2 cups of coffee, like your neighbors can handle you having a moderate amount of weeds at all times... but give it a huge dose of fertilizer and rain, and the weeds pop up everywhere and in excess and now it is messing with your once-beautiful garden of a brain and your neighbors start getting mad (headache). It's best to go easy on the watering, easy on the fertilizer, easy on the caffeine, and let the weeds slowly die out, back to some reasonable balance.

If you find a good balance, like I did, but still have headaches, then you have to use additional tools to help you. For me, there was no silver bullet to healing my crazy headache. It took all 49 therapies; all 49 steps! Once I found a step that helped slightly, I didn't just abandon it because it wasn't a 100% cure. It was more like each step decreased the headache by about 2% from the max, and I had to hold onto each lesson, and add other ones concurrently on top of it. By about the 40th step, I was

devoting all of my free-time to my health and incorporating all the therapies into my daily life.

Chapter 8; Importance #21; M

Research Time! Finding main causes of

headaches - it's either lack of

nutrients to the brain or inflammation

in the brain

This will be the last research-type chapter- sorry science-geeks... and you are welcome novel-loving readers! After this chapter, it will read more like a novel, just me narrating my experiences and leaving it up to you to decide which experiences might help you or your loved ones who are living with chronic headaches or pain.

Research has more and more noticed that the delineation between migraine headache, cluster, tension etc are really more about the symptoms which the patient feels, and not about the chemical pathways and physiological responses that are occurring. We are finding out that all headaches have a lot in common. With that in mind, I prefer not to break headaches into lots of labels based on symptoms, but instead into the two simple *reasons* that my literature research has found for *all* headaches. If you have a headache, it is because of one or both of these causes (each one with lots of subcategories and complicated interconnections). Here are the two reasons why we get headaches 1) lack of nutrients to the brain or 2) inflammation.

I think the clearest thing now to do, is consider lots of obvious causes of headaches, and assign it to either #1 or #2. In the field of logic, “inversion logic” is very helpful (to see if something is true, consider if the opposite is true. If it is, you could be wrong, if it isn’t true, you could be right). In medicine, the goal is for each person to be happy and healthy, but it is very difficult to just make a drug which will make us healthy or for a psychologist to just point and yell at a depressed patient, “Hey! Be happy!” It *is*, however, easy to see which things cause a certain ailment, and work backwards from there. A hot area of research now is gene knock-out therapy. After the great Genome sequencing project, where the entire human DNA was sequenced, scientists are now going through the more difficult task of saying, well, ok, we know a bunch of GGCTATGAATTC random-looking combinations, so what? We have to make sense of all these three billion base-pairs. Thus enter proteomics, the study of understanding which proteins are generated from which section of DNA (aka “gene”).

So what evil scientists around the world love to do is make GMO rats which have a certain gene “knocked out” or disabled in some way (I say ‘evil scientists’ as a joke, many ethicists think that the end benefit for all life is greater than the suffering of the animal, whereas other ethicists feel like *a priori*, an end can never justify a questionable means). Luckily for the rats, 98% of DNA is “junk DNA” which serves no purpose, although that idea is rapidly changing as more evidence comes out, but basically, 98% of DNA does not directly code for proteins. Instead of the condescending term “junk DNA”, scientists often prefer to call it “noncoding DNA”. We don’t care about doing Frankenstein experiments on rats, but wouldn’t want to offend the beauty that is a DNA molecule, and so our code of politically correct terminology is phasing out “junk DNA”.

So a bunch of rats grow without a certain gene and 98% of them are fine, yay! For the 2% unlucky saps, we found out, “wow, without this gene, a rat is a hemophiliac, without this

gene, a rat gets osteoporosis quickly” and so on. By finding out which obvious problem is attached to which obvious symptom, we can more confidently figure out what is going on.

That is how we should approach headache research. Here we go.

1) If you fast for three days and drink lots of water, but no food, you get a headache. **Conclusion:** your brain needs sugar to function properly. If you take away a steady supply of sugar, you *will* get a headache. This falls under Category # 1- lack of nutrients cause a headache. (As an aside, of course this doesn't mean you should down slurpees and soda and processed sugar all the time. By sugar, I mean the raw material the brain eats, but it is far healthier to consume it in a complex carbohydrate form, like wheat, potatoes, or even better, lentils, which give a slow-release supply of sugar. But it *will* work for some people stuck in a long 3-hour meeting to suck on a piece of candy, if that is the issue.)

2) If you don't get enough water, you get dehydrated, and a headache. **Conclusion:** your brain needs water, or else you *will* get a headache. This falls under Category #1- nutrients.

3) If you climb up to 10,000 feet of elevation and are not acclimated to it, you will get a headache from lack of oxygen. **Conclusion:** your brain needs oxygen. Lower the oxygen and you *will* get a headache. That is why lack of iron causes headaches because iron is needed to transport oxygen throughout your body, including your brain. I heard of someone drilling a hole in their skull to give their brain more oxygen to help a long headache. I considered it, but didn't like the high risk of increased bacterial infection in my brain, and figured it was not worth it.

4) Protein. If you are low on protein, your blood can be lacking in protein molecules which keep the blood thin, and it is difficult for blood, and therefore oxygen and all nutrients to reach the brain. Protein-deficient people have headaches. **Conclusion:** your brain needs protein- this is also Category #1- nutrients.

5) Consider a car accident or head injury, or being hit while playing football. What happens? You get a headache! The brain essentially bruises and that is painful. **Conclusion:** The brain needs to *not* be jostled. If it is, it *will* get a headache. This falls under Category #2- inflammation.

6) Not sleeping enough or sleeping too much. We all know this causes a headache. **Conclusion:** non-ideal sleep amounts causes headache, so to be headache-free, be sure you get the proper amount of sleep. I think most scientists think this is a nutrient issue, so it would be Category #1, but like I mentioned, there are some psychosomatic and mood issues related to this, which can signal inflammation, so it can also be in Category #2.

7) Eating cold icecream or drinking too much of a cold liquid causes a brief, but intense “brainfreeze” headache. Researchers have actually seriously used induced-brainfreezes on humans (see we are not only mean to rats, but also humans). Brain scans reveal really similar effects in the brain as a migraine, and patients also admit that it feels similar to a migraine. The cold causes the body to raise blood flow to the brain to try to warm it up, but like I mentioned before, swelling blood vessels push against nerves, (inflammation) cause pain, which starts a painful chain-reaction **Conclusion:** Changes in temperature and bloodflow cause headaches; this is in Category #2- inflammation.

8) Being “stressed out” causes a headache. **Conclusion:** Stress can cause a headache, so people should learn relaxation techniques. This one is complicated, and further research is required. Stress can cause a person to tighten their muscles, causing a neck ache, which can both cause inflammation from the neck to the brain, or alter nutrient flow from the neck to the brain, so it is in both Category #1 and #2. Stress is recently starting to show cellular effects, which could cause how a cell reacts to inflammation (or makes it more susceptible) *or* change how it processes nutrients, so it is in both categories. Stress is also very difficult to measure and treat.

9) Super bright light or loud, annoying sounds or music can cause a headache. **Conclusion:** Light and sound can cause or worsen a headache, so in some cases, limiting them can help. This reaction, (even a psychological reaction) that we have causes inflammation, so is in Category #2. Again, we see our mental state (and how we react to our surroundings) can cause inflammation, and therefore a headache.

These are some of the most obvious causes of headaches. Hopefully, it is now easier to see why common remedies that you have probably already been told (such as the ones on wikihow to cure a headache) make sense. People recommend you get enough water, and food and have a healthy diet. It is recommended to focus on breathing, or exercise, which can help with the oxygen nutrient. These deal with category #1.

People recommend taking it seriously as soon as it comes and doing everything you can to lessen it, before the chain-reaction effect takes place. People recommend a cold washcloth on the forehead. That can be seen to help inflammation. People recommend over-the-counter pain medications to help with inflammation (Category #2). For an intense headache, it is recommended to lay down in a relaxed position with the lights off, listening to relaxing music and smelling aromatherapy. All of these therapies relate to a Category #2 headache- lower your stress and stimuli and your inflammation-causing responses to them by relaxing and putting your mind in a better state than whatever state it was when the headache started. Some websites and folk-remedies even say to touch people (hug people you love, not just creepily walk up to someone and poke them in the mall) because it releases endorphins, helping with pain, inflammation, and that puts you in a better mood, just like exercise. It is also commonly recommended to try different acupressure or massage techniques on the scalp, neck, and back, which may help lower inflammation. Food allergies also can be a main culprit of inflammation, and therefore a headache.

It has helped me be a more-informed citizen and healer of headaches to think of all headaches being related to either Category #1) lack of nutrients or Category #2) inflammation. In today's Age of Information, we suffer from TMI- Too Much Information. It is difficult to sift through the hearsay, superstitious information, and truly scientifically-backed information. Even with lots of scientific information, it is difficult to organize the information to see the true, underlying cause of a headache. I hope that as you keep a headache journal and scientifically and methodically analyze your situation, it will be helpful to consider whether your headaches are falling under Category # 1 or 2 (or both), to more efficiently prescribe yourself the appropriate healing therapy. I know it has helped me.

And please don't torture any rats unless you absolutely have to.

Chapter 9; Importance #44; M

Suicidal? Almost swam to death

“Hey E!, You wanna come to Teddy Bear Cove to celebrate Mackenzie’s birthday? We’re gonna camp out. There’s a bird sanctuary there. It’ll be sick!” asked my hippy and anarchist friends.

“Sure! Sounds fun! Let me go get my didgeridoo and sleeping bag and then let’s go!”

About eight of us piled into a small, beat-up, old Volvo station wagon like clowns, and filled it with marijuana smoke. This was after already having a ritual where everyone sat in a circle in a small room and listened to Led Zeppelin’s “Battle of Evermore” song over and over. I enjoy partaking in a second-hand manner and by sitting with the group for fun, but didn’t partake directly since I still wasn’t sure if it had any connection to my headache.

The beige Volvo might have looked like any other car cruising I-5, surrounded by beautiful, large evergreen trees, mist, and a beautiful, grey-blue ocean... except for the small trail of smoke coming out of the slightly cracked windows, like a Cheech-and-Chong-mobile.

We met some old, naked, male hippies sitting around an unlit campfire. We all sat down next to them and talked to them. A cute girl whispered next to me, "I guess this is a nudist beach!" Some people kept their clothes on, and some didn't.

Finally, after some time staring at a burnt-out set of sticks and logs, and darkness coming, someone said, "Should we like start a fire, or something, man?"

The old hippies said, "Yeah man! That would be cool! We're just too lazy to get wood and stuff. Also, this asshole here decided to poison this whole area and kill, like, all the plants and bushes and stuff, so it's harder to find wood."

"Why did you do that?!" I asked the naked, accused man, wondering if it was because he felt insecure with his small, misshaped penis and testicles.

"Cuz he's a fucking selfish asshole, that's why!" the accuser butt-in.

The accused finally said quietly, "I don't know. I just wanted to. Everyone here is always talking about trees and hippy shit, and I thought it could use something different."

After a few awkward pauses, we eventually had a good time with beer, marijuana, Cuban cigars, stories, political debates, and a drum circle.

I heard a "Kaw-Ka-a-aw!" and answered with a muffled "Kaw-Ka-aw" while playing didgeridoo. Then, "Koo-Ko-o-o-o!" and my more guttural "Koo-Ko-ro".

"What's that?" asked some of my friends.

"It's a Raven, man, the dude's communicating with a freakin' Ravin, a Spiritual Guide. That's cool man.", said the non-poisoning Old Hippy in his Cheech and Chong accent.

This went on for a few minutes. *Wow, cool! I'm communicating with Nature!* I thought.

The old hippy continued, "Yeah man, around these parts in the Pacific Northwest, the Raven is a very important spirit. Some tribes say the Raven created the whole universe. Others

say you gotta be careful with them because the Raven is The Trickster.”

“A Trickster? What do you mean?” asked one of my friends who is excellent at roller derby.

“Yeah, the Raven is a Trickster, big time. The Raven is a Trickster. It will like, trick you to go into the wrong place in a forest and get you lost. Or as a Spiritual Guide, it will trick you to do something to teach you a lesson. You gotta be careful communicating and following a Raven. The Raven is The Trickster, man!”

After many other interesting stories, and music, we eventually crashed on sleeping bags on grass, and rocks, somehow confident that it wouldn't rain too hard, even though it was western Washington, and the rumors are true that it really does rain almost every day, but in a soft, sprinkle-fashion, coming from nonstop overcast, grey clouds. You get used to it after a while, and even learn to enjoy it. You either learn to enjoy it, or you get SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder; depression from lack of sunlight.

We woke up, had some birthday cake, and finished the stub of the Cuban cigar... well, I claimed the cigar, while everyone else smoked marijuana. We had remembered to bring cake and instruments, but it was around this time some people were noticing that we hadn't really brought food, so we were getting hungry.

I stretched, and admired the beautiful Puget Sound, and misty, mysterious-looking island in front of us which was a bird sanctuary.

One of my favorite friends there had really intense, bright, large, intelligent grey eyes and puffy, dark curly hair. I would often play insane, and fast rounds (about 50) of rock-paper-scissor games with him on top of cars in the rain. “Hey man, I think I want to swim to that island over there”, I said to him.

“Sure, yeah! Go for it!” he replied, not actually thinking I would try for very long.

I walked slowly to the rocky shore. *I wish I had my swim suit and goggles. I would go in my boxers, but then they would all be wet when I got out, so I guess I'll go naked. At least it is a Nudist Beach, so it's not a big deal. This is probably stupid, so I should probably ask God if I should do it, "Dear God, I know this is stupid, but I really want to see your beauty revealed in this bird sanctuary. Please tell me if and when I should turn around, and I will."* I paused only a few seconds, looking across what looked like only a mile of water to the small island. In an Olympic-length triathlon, I finish the one-mile swim in about a half-hour in open-water conditions. The scene was beautiful but intimidating, but I expected to be there in about a half hour. *It's going to be cold since it is early April, so I'll have to start out with a fast pace. This will be good triathlon training, even though my Mom has told me in the past not to swim across large bodies of water.* One of my last thoughts before entering the abyss was a lyric from Pearl Jam, my favorite band, *"The Oceans made me, but who came up with love?"* and to this I ominously added, *from the ocean I came, and to the ocean I return.*

I waded out slowly until the water was just above my knees, and then with a shallow dive, -Splash-! I was in!

Ohhhh boy this is cold, this is cold! I breathed really fast. Biofeedback interests me, and its relation to the psyche. I had a roommate who suffered from anxiety, and as his attacks came, his breathing and heart rate increased, and his *knowledge* of that made him *more* worried and anxious, which further accelerated the heart rate and breathing rate, even causing sweat...another chain-reaction phenomenon.

Similarly, it has always interested me how jumping into cold water simulates the physical responses to fear. It immediately causes me to breathe so fast that it is basically like hyperventilating, and then the shivers come, just like the phrase “he was shaking in his boots”. People experiencing fear often

breathe fast, but it is interesting that breathing fast and shallow *reminds* one of fear, and so the physiological experiences *make* me feel afraid. Then, my psyche starts thinking of fearful thoughts, like “Am I going to drown? What creatures are swimming below me that I can’t see? Are there sharks here? Are Loch Ness monsters real?” And before I know it, I really *am* scared!...another chain-reaction from self-feeding feedback loops between the mind and body.

Eventually, the shivering subsided a bit, and I tried to focus on my form, and swim as fast as I could to warm up. I heard some friends shouting in the background, egging me on, I presumed.

I swam and swam and swam, occasionally looking up to see my target. The island didn’t seem to get any larger, but on one of the few occasions I took to stop and look back, I noticed my friends looked like ants. That was an indication that even after going a long distance, I was still not much closer to the island, so the island was farther than I thought.

Should I turn back now God, now that I know it is farther than I thought? I waited for a response, but didn’t hear one, so kept swimming.

The fears of ocean animals below me in the murky green-blue-black water still scared me. I couldn’t see anything without goggles, except for vague, blurry dark shades of black-green.

Meanwhile, kayakers in their thirties were paddling a few miles south of me towards my location; I, unaware of them; they, unaware of me.

I unfortunately kept thinking of dark, strange thoughts. I not only thought of scary monsters, but also whether my headache would ever leave me, and what I was to do with my life now that it was messed up, and seemed meaningless if it would always carry with it a horrible passenger; the Bunion in the Brain! Damn it!

I am no longer swimming for fun. I am swimming to conquer my fears. I am swimming to show that I won't let my headache beat me! I am stronger!

I kept thinking of thoughts like that, and also tried to have some periods of no-thought, just meditative swimming, and enjoying the feeling of feet and hands becoming numb; no longer bothering me.

I kept swimming, and started to get pretty tired and would stop occasionally to catch my breath and tread water.

I suddenly felt a strong feeling/voice "Now! Turn around now!" I had been praying off-and-on and wasn't sure if it was my own intuition, or God, or a guardian angel, Eleanor.

I stopped and tread water and assessed my situation. *Here is what I know 1) I am tired and want to stop 2) I have been swimming for about an hour and it looks like I am about two-thirds there. It would be faster to go to the island, but what will I do when I get there? I will shiver in the cold and try to warm up with no clothes. Then I will have to swim all the way back. 3) I really want to go to the island 4) I really want to live 5) there's a chance I might die on the island and there's a chance I might die swimming back. hmmm... I guess I should have turned around at the half-way mark. All I can think of is shivering naked on an island, stranded, and not able to muster the strength or courage to go back into this frigid water... I guess I will turn around and go back.*

Slowly, and with much regret, I turned around and looked at the beach where I started; my new goal. *I think that is the beach I started... it's so far now, I can't really tell where I started. I guess I'll aim for that clump of large rocks... they look somewhat familiar... I should be careful not to drift.*

Meanwhile, the kayakers had a decision to make. About nine out of ten times they always choose a certain route; a favorite route of theirs. But today was different for some reason. For some reason they all just sort of looked at each other and

nodded and had a strong feeling they should take the route less-paddled today.

Now, with most of my easily accessible glycogen stores depleted, my body had to start the slower, less optimum task of obtaining energy by any means necessary... converting fat to sugar... converting muscle to sugar... anything to stay warm and keep moving...anything... including diverting sugar from the brain to the arm and leg muscles.

Without the exciting goal of the bird sanctuary to motivate me, I now felt less motivated. It was more like doing homework; it had to be done, but I did so grudgingly and only out a sense of duty...and survival.

The Pearl Jam song, Push Me, Pull me came to mind, and summed up my feelings pretty well:

“(Get me outta here... If reality is what I see...)

I had a false belief. I thought I came here to stay.
We're all just visiting. All just breaking like waves.
The oceans made me, but who came up with love?
Push me pull me, push me. Or pull me out.

Push me pull me. Or pull me out. (x2)

So if there were no angels would there be no sin?
Huh, you better stop me before I begin.
But let me say.
If I behave can you arrange a spacious hole in the ground?
Somewhere nice. Make it nice.
Where the land meets high tide.

Push me pull me. Or just pull me out.
Push me pull me.
Push me or pull me. Or pull me out.

Push me pull me, out.

Like a cloud dropping rain I'm discarding all thought.

I'll dry up leaving puddles on the ground.

I'm like an opening band for the sun.

Push me pull me. Or just pull me out.

Push me pull me. Push or pull me out.

Push me pull me. Just pull me out, out, out.

Push me pull me, out.

I've had enough, said enough, felt enough, I'm fine now.

Push me pull me. See ya later..."

I started to lose grip on my mind. It was like I was watching myself from above. All I thought of was *right arm, splash, left arm, splash, right arm, splash, left arm, splash, right arm, splash, left arm, splash*. I noticed that I had to take more and more breaks to put myself in a ball and rest and hug my legs to remind myself of warmth.

*That's weird. I'm swimming up a wall now. Oh. No, I'm just dizzy. *Gulp* Wups, don't breathe the water.*

My head spun. I didn't really know what I was doing. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel tired or cold or fear of dying, like I had. I didn't think about sea monsters or bird sanctuaries. I didn't think about anything. I just observed my body pitifully flailing in an ocean that I was adapted to millions of years ago, but that I had too-long adapted apart from- an old friend who I no longer knew.

I started to feel some of the greatest peace and love I had ever felt. I didn't have any sense of self. I didn't care about my body. I felt really happy and euphoric. I'm coming home. I'm coming home. I see the light. I was dizzy. I was tripping on a near-death experience. I felt like my body and soul had expanded to the farthest reaches of the universe so that "I" ceased to exist,

and instead “I” was just the whole universe- no longer separate- no longer able to make any decisions apart from it, but to only take joy in pure existence. I was perfectly happy and numb and ready to die.

But just then, my body diverted a short burst of sugar to the brain because it required a decision, it actually needed it now. The eyes had registered something different, something new, something that required a decision. I snapped back into my mortal (*very mortal!*) body and had to think like a human again.

A kayaker! I could ask for help! Wait, maybe I can make it... it's maybe only half-a-mile left. I can see the shore more clearly now. I could probably make it on my own. I don't want to put them out of their way. I don't want to ask for help if I don't need it.

Here is where the *real* wrestling with the ego occurred. It wasn't the two-hour swim I needed to beat my headache and beat my ego. It was these precious five seconds.

Should I really yell for help? That's so... weird... so lame. I don't need help.

Pause

*I need help. No, I **do** need help. I could die. I don't even know what I'm doing. I'm on autopilot.*

I weakly raised my hand, doubting it would be seen over the waves. “help” I said feebly, with a shaky voice.

It sounds so weird, asking for help-like one of those pitiful victims in a horror movie. What am I doing? Well if you're going to ask for help, you better make sure they hear you.

“H-E-E-E-L-P! I need H-E-E-E-L-P! HELP!” Satisfied? I need help ok? I admit it! I need help!

Meanwhile, the kayakers were paddling and enjoying the scenery. One of them pointed with his paddle to the left, out towards the Pacific Ocean, westward. “What's that?”

They all looked, and saw someone waving a hand in a sloppy fashion and looking in bad shape.

“It’s a swimmer! They need help! Let’s go!” They paddled fast. As they got closer they saw the swimmer was in really bad shape- it looked like someone crawling half-asleep in water. They paddled faster, as fast as they ever had. They got to the swimmer and said, “Here, hold onto this on the back and we’ll pull you to shore”.

“Can I get in the boat? I want to get in. I need to get out of here.” asked the swimmer.

“What?! No, we might flip. There’s nowhere for you to go. Just hold on.”

I didn’t remember asking to enter the boat. After asking for help, I had blacked out again. The next thing I remember was a feeling of being tugged by a powerful force- water rushing past me faster than it had before- I looked up and just saw a flash of white water, a red kayak, and yellow paddles and a blur of activity. I only saw this picture in my mind for about a second, and then I blacked out again, leaving my subconscious to somehow figure out on its own how to not drown or freeze to death. Some genetic memories are wiser than the organisms they make. My body took over, and unseated me from the driver’s seat.

I woke up shivering like I never have before.

“Good. He’s shivering now. That is a good sign.” I heard a savior of mine say. I squinted and tried to see who my saviors were.

“Who are you all? Are you angels?...In bikinis?” They all laughed.

“No”, they replied, “we just happened to be passing by when you were about to drown. What were you doing out there? You’ve just been mumbling nonsense... something about a Raven”.

“Yeah!” I said weakly in-between chattering teeth. My eyes widened. “It must have been the Raven. The Raven is a trickster. The Raven tricks people to teach a lesson.”

“He’s still out of it”, one kayaker said to another.

Meanwhile, my friends, losing sight of me, had called 911, and an ambulance was on the way, but the ambulance was going to have to wait for a train. So two of the old hippy guys got on the railroad tracks and jumped up and down, doing naked jumping jacks yelling at the train, “STOOOOOP! STOOOOOOOP!” The train engineer thought, *What the hell?* and started stopping the train, not sure if it would stop in time.

A helicopter flew overhead, looking for a clearing, and a place to land; not able to find one.

The ambulance roared with lights and sirens across the railroad tracks with the train waiting.

A shiny, aluminum, super-fast boat with a coast guard insignia suddenly came crashing up to shore unexpectedly, and large men jumped out, grabbed me, still shaking, still half-conscious. I weakly asked, “Who gave me these clothes? I should give them back.” I had a cap on and a nice shirt, but still naked otherwise, and I felt self-conscious.

“They said you can have it”, came a reply.

I looked back at my saviors and gave a thumbs up and said, “Thank you!”, and then blacked out again.

Next thing I knew, I was in a bright orange heavy-duty sleeping bag with about ten centimeters of thick, white, warm wool on the inside. I blacked out again.

Then I felt a prick in my veins and warm solution entering my body with sugar. I woke up suddenly, and could very quickly think clearly and grasp what was happening. I was in what looked like an ambulance, with medical attendants, but in the huge aluminum speed boat.

“Can you hear me? You were hypoglycemic. You didn’t have any blood sugar. You were also hypothermic, you had a body temperature of 92°F. It is 47°F in the water now. Most people die after being in water that cold after only twenty

minutes. How long were you out there? What were you doing? Did you have anything to eat? Have to done any drugs?"

I looked at my watch. "I think I was swimming for over two hours". Pause. "I just wanted to swim to the bird sanctuary. I haven't done any drugs. I just had some cake and a Cuban cigar in the morning, and that's it."

The strapping men who had carried my limp body like a toy doll laughed. They were good-natured, "That's ok. We won't bust you for the Cuban cigar. We just want to know what was going on. Are you suicidal? Have you been having suicidal thoughts?"

Nobody had ever asked me that before. I could see how in that situation, it would be a good question to ask. But I had never considered it before... maybe I *was* suicidal deep down. I don't know. "I... I don't *think* so..." I replied. The question bothered me; not because they asked it, but because I didn't know the answer to it. Was this one of those cheesy 'cries for help' I had heard about suicidal people doing... only more subconsciously? I don't know. Maybe.

They whisked me quickly to an ER, while I just lay there feeling stupid, and contemplating what had just happened. I'm glad I asked for help. I guess I really did need it. I had only seen people yell for help in movies, so it had felt weird doing it in real life, but I'm glad I did. I saved my life by not listening to my ego which had wanted to save myself on my own. The angels in bikinis saved me by listening to their 'feeling' to go an unusual route, which put them at my location at the exactly perfect time. The coast guard saved me. I felt really humbled and stupid.

Once in the hospital, a large, young man in a coast guard T-shirt with bulging muscles came in to say goodbye to me and see if I was doing ok. I said, "yes" and thanked him. As he was about to leave I asked him, "Do you ever get tired of saving dumb-asses like me?" I meant it as a real question, but also as a joke, thinking he would laugh afterward. Instead he just stood there, and a grave, and serious face came over him. I knew that face.

That was the face my dad had when he, as a Search and Rescue volunteer reflected on the many dead bodies he had to pick up, some of them in rigor mortis and gross shape.

“No”, he replied seriously, “we only get frustrated when we *don't* save people...” His voice trailed off, while he thought about all the dead bodies he has seen, or all the missions where they couldn't find the person they were looking for.

I burst into tears. He excused himself quietly and left. It was all too much for me. There were so many people who came together to help me. I had done something stupid, and my ego had miscalculated so many things, bypassing my reasoning abilities. My physics professor, one of my favorite teachers, had told me later I should have known not to do it based on thermal heat transfer properties of water, and he was right. I was supposedly smart, but what drew me out there? Why was I so desperate? Was I suicidal? I think I must be deep down. I always was adventurous, but every adventurer knows the clear boundary between smart and stupid risks. I should have known. I *did* know. So I must be suicidal deep down... some kind of itch is there which wants me to suffer and/or die.

I cried and cried, feeling so lucky to be alive, and ashamed.

A nurse came in and asked if I was ok. “Yes, just feeling lucky to be alive”, I replied, fighting more tears.

“Well you should feel lucky to be alive! Swimming alone in the ocean like that is dangerous!” she replied.

I also felt guilty and ashamed because at the time, still shortly after September 11th, 2001, I was getting tired of the media and the way they drummed up patriotism and support for war. I was even tired of hearing firefighters being called “heroes” when some experts suggested that actually, they could have saved more lives by not rushing into the twin towers (including their own) because they took up a lane of stairs going up, which slowed people down who were trying to escape. I just remember feeling like the whole thing got blown out of proportion. I was

already despising the inevitable future of always living with an unwinnable War on Terror, like another War on Drugs, with PATRIOT acts, surveillance, arresting of anti-war protester friends of mine... the list goes on. I had already started missing the days when terrorism was hardly ever discussed on TV, and now it seems like we are all living in a twisted 24/7 terrorism reality TV game show.

And then...

And then the Coast Guard saved my life...

Coast Guard men and women *were* heroes, not just to me, but to everyone, and so were fire fighters.

I was too harsh on the media for portraying the 9-11 firefighters as heroes... even Fox News.

Before I left the hospital I contemplated what the Trickster Raven had taught me. *I was tricked into thinking that Mother Nature was nice and would take care of me, and that I was One with Her, and she would take me to some Garden of Eden Bird Sanctuary. Mother Nature doesn't care about me, she just IS. She is the meanest of the teachers. My parents care about me. My friends care about me. A guardian angel cares about me. God cares about me. Naked old hippies jumping up and down care about me. Kayakers care about me. The Coast Guard (and by extension, the Government) cares about me. The enemy is not Fox news and the Government or some conspiracy, and Nature is not made of all harmless fairies and bunnies...*

*The enemy is **me**.*

Chapter 10; Importance # 2; MS

Importance of helping others; Haiti Trip

With my ego starting to be exposed for what it was, a self-destructive, self-pitying judger of others, I redoubled my efforts to improve myself by reaching out to God through various campus church groups.

Helping people, and even plants and animals, or petting a dog, makes us happy. It causes us to send chemicals throughout our body which make us feel good, and that can even numb pain, and lessen inflammation. If a person has a Category #1 headache where there is just a pure lack of some nutrient, it's not going to suddenly give you iron if you are anemic, for instance, but it *can* help a Category #2 headache, at least a small amount. Every little bit counts, at least for chronic headache sufferers. We are in a marathon race of healing, not a sprint.

So I went to Haiti with a Christian group for a month to teach English and help at an orphanage of about 100 children, ranging from 2-years-olds to 20-years-olds. They relied on a constant supply of volunteers because they only had 1-2 paid cooks, and one paid person to take care of them all. The older

children helped the younger children. The older children would stay for a few years until they could find a job or get sponsored by churches in the US to attend college.

The last chapter was so long, (and necessarily so, because it was a defining moment in my wrestling of my ego, and headache) that I don't want to write much about the Haiti Trip, other than to say that I think it *did* incrementally help my headache because it helped me be more others-focused, and made me happier.

Some other time I may write a short book about all the crazy Voodoo doctors who put curses on us and threw stuff at us, and all the crazy drivers, who, like Indian tap-tap drivers, have little trinkets of gurus (or in this case, brightly painted names of Jesus) which protect their vehicles, which they interpret to mean that they can drive as reckless as they want. I don't suppose any of them had learned from any 2-hr hypothermia reckless swimming experiences to give them pause to think that faith is great, but shouldn't ever supersede common-sense actions.

Chapter 11; Importance # 24; BMS

Find Triggers, could even be church!

Our brains are all wired to think in a tribal mentality. We make decisions and decide what is real and what to believe based on our tribal affiliation, not based on evidence. People are tribal members of Democrats or Republicans. At the time of my headache, I was a member of the Conservative Christian Evangelical Tribe, and Marijuana Smoking Environmentalist Tribe. If your tribes give you a headache, you need to leave them! They could be deep-seated triggers of a chronic headache! Here are some experiences which helped me realize I was in the wrong tribe:

1) In Haiti, a local member of the charity lined up all children who admitted to playing in the water of the well while he was gone, and beat them with a stick.

2) Also on the Haiti-trip I noticed with disgust that the charity would only give evening food to the children if they participated in an hour-long church service at night.

3) People in the Christian Evangelical services called me “weird” in a bad way, and said I didn’t belong. They said it was

weird of me to care about using biodegradable shampoos in rivers in Haiti that other residents used as a drinking source.

4) Fundamental Christian Evangelical friends of mine, when asked about inaccuracies or conflicting, or immoral passages in the Bible would say things like, “Well, I don’t know how strong *your* faith is, but *my* faith is so strong that I just trust that God knew what he was doing when he wrote the Bible and that God moves in mysterious ways and that his love and power and wisdom is greater than ours.” ... sooo should I or should I not give my future daughters to guests to have sex with like Lot did? They didn’t answer my question, but just said that I had weak faith.

5) Long after I left Haiti, the same Christian group I travelled with continued to give me newsletters. After the horrible earthquake which devastated that country, they didn’t mention any health support that they provided, but only talked about how they could use that unfortunate event to redouble their efforts on converting people to Christianity and launched several outreach events.

6) Shortly after 9-11, the pastor of our Christian Evangelical group called a “fireside chat” at his house, and said that we should trust G. W. Bush and his war, because the Bible says that sometimes God uses armies as swords of justice. About \$2 Trillion dollars ended up being spent to kill about a million Iraqis by the end of the Iraq war in the name of preventing terrorism, and my research and psyche has had a hard time understanding and quantifying exactly how much Holy Justice was accomplished.

7) As far as Hippies go- the entire northwest is full of them, and I love it. But I realized I didn’t fit in really well later when all the anti-fluorination and anti-vaccine campaigns started obviously negatively impacting human health. That’s the thing about tribal mentality- obviously wrong ideas or inconsistencies are not obvious when you are in the tribe. Tribal members are experts at justifying anything and convincing its adherents to

believe something other than the obvious. Nowadays I am very doubtful any time someone tells me they have “special” information that “nobody knows”, and that contradicts simple rules of logic, or scientifically-measured data.

So just as I noticed sources of strife within my own self while swimming for two hours (strife of the ego fighting with me “should I swim, should I not swim?”, “Should I ask for help, should I not ask for help?” and “Are firefighters heroes, are they not heroes?”), I also slowly realized that my tribes were causing me strife. The beneficial purpose of a tribe is to make you feel better and act as a support group. If being a Fundamental Christian Evangelist makes you happy, go for it! If smoking pot and complaining about the government while mooching off of government programs and believing in conspiracy theories makes you happy, then join various Hippy and Anarchist tribes; go for it! It just wasn’t for me and it took me awhile to find out that some level of stress in my life came from not belonging to the right Tribe for me.

Stress causes headaches. It is a trigger (a starting point) for headaches, and needs to be eliminated. So as weird as it sounds, for my particular experience, even *church* was a trigger for my headache!

For chronic headaches, one might have to dig deep within one’s self to find the psychological triggers, and it could take years without proper guidance (such as friends, psychologists etc.).

For just an average headache here or there (even a migraine), it is usually much simpler, and then you just have to follow a scientific process, like in chapter 8 to find it. If food allergies are the trigger, then an elimination diet can help find that. Going to a nutritionist can help find if there are other food issues which could be triggers. Improper sleep and water and electrolytes can be easy triggers to avoid. Look for the easy things first!

Stress is something that all people have, and it is very difficult to find the root cause, unless you are enlightened! It is also difficult to mitigate. Most of us are caught up in the rat-race of capitalism and don't have the financial means to relax on a beach somewhere all day. Instead, we must learn to enjoy our jobs, and *enjoy the grind*.

Since my stress and general psychologically-messed-up-self was the most difficult trigger (or more accurately, an entire state of being) to find, understand, and heal, it ends up taking the majority of my 49 steps of healing.

Stress is a very important trigger, and it also increases the intensity and likelihood of many illnesses, not just psychosomatic ones. To relax is therefore, one of the best therapies. But how does one truly relax? I wish I could just have a drill sergeant come up to me and say, "Get down and give me twenty! Then get up and be 100% relaxed, you hear me maggot?" and then I get up completely relaxed. That example sounds stupid, but that is exactly what we do in our heads sometimes when we *force* ourselves to relax. Sometimes relaxing and de-stressing comes by accident when life is most fun. That is what the next chapter's experience is all about.

Chapter 12; Importance #3; BMS

Relax! Have fun! Road trip from NM to LA to

Seattle. picking up murderer hitchhikers, fun at

Wazzu epic party

After an interesting Research Experience for Undergrads (REU) with University of New Mexico and Sandia National Labs, and having lived in a 1976 Volkswagen van I bought on eBay for \$500, and then had the government pay me back with “living expenses”, I set off for a scenic trip from Albuquerque to LA, and then up the beautiful west coast all the way to Seattle.

I had worked over 70 hours a week, for little pay, like a lot of scientists do, and was ready for a fun break.

I saw a sketchy-looking guy on the side of the highway with an American Flag bandana, pasty, flaking, white and red sun-burnt face, arms, and lips, and a large hiking backpack, which I had grown accustomed to being associated with homeless people, and thought, *I’m a young, poor male. I don’t have much to lose picking up a hitchhiker.* So I pulled over and let him in.

“Yeah, I’m a drifter. I’ve done all kindsa odd jobs- construction, oil rig, farm-hand. Now that I’m divorced and all alone, I don’t have much to look forward to, so I just wanna make

it to all 50 states. I've always wanted to go to all 50 U-ni-ted States", Flaghead said with a bit of a *Texus* accent.

After being thoroughly entertained by Flaghead for a few hours, I saw another hitchhiker, and pulled over, and enjoyed how happy and grateful he looked for a ride out of the sun. The old van didn't have air conditioning, so we just always kept the windows rolled down all the way, but at least it was out of the sun.

The second hitchhiker was part Mexican and considered himself a Deadhead and followed the remaining members of the Grateful Dead at a rate of (supposedly) 40 concerts per year. He lived for it. He did construction, and didn't consider it to be in opposition to Mother Nature, but an extension of it, since it is natural for animals to want to build a nice home for themselves. I thought it was a conflicting argument at the time, but it stuck with me, and I saw some truth to it. He worked hard on construction for half a year, and went to concerts the other half of the year.

Flaghead turned to Deadhead and said, "Got any weapons or drugs?" He apparently had appointed himself guard dog, and had a role to play in checking newcomers. "Uhhh I don't think so man, maybe just some weed and a kitchen knife for sandwiches", was the reply.

"Let me see it. Bring it up front.", said Flaghead. And he confiscated a very pitiful, 3", thoroughly used kitchen knife with a cheap plastic, black handle. He nodded at me like he had done me a great favor. I didn't particularly care or want a strict code within the van, but I also was entertained by the evolution of the little community developing within the van and wanted to let it play itself out in its own fashion, so watched more as an observer, even though it was my van and my gas and I could have made any rules that I wanted.

From that point on, Flaghead became my pitbull and bouncer, even though I didn't really trust him. It wasn't that I didn't trust him, it was more that I got the overall feeling that he

was a little sketchy, and sad, with a troubled past, and my intuition ended up being correct.

After picking up two, I felt like it would be rude to be exclusionary and refuse to pick up more since the van had plenty of room, and nice, comfortable, soft bench seats. So I ended up having an attitude like Jim Carrey's character in *Dumb and Dumber* when he picked up a whole vanload of migrant farm workers, "Pick 'em up!"

We picked up alcoholics in New Mexico, and dropped them off at AA meetings in Arizona. We picked up homeless people in Arizona, and dropped them off at homeless shelters in California. We picked up someone on the way to a Ronald McDonald hospital to visit relatives who were receiving free health care from that charity. I had always seen the little Ronald McDonald donation the few times I had been in a McDonald's and I had always wondered what it was like. Sometimes with charities you wonder where your money is going and if the charity is even legitimate. I was very impressed with the Ronald McDonald House facilities for poor people, and wish there were more resources like that available for poor people. Being a healthnut, I don't have a particularly favorable opinion of McDonalds, but that didn't stop me from being impressed with their charity work.

These were all really good things for me to see. I was on my own adventure, and letting life flow like a river. I was not controlling the river, but using my free will to slightly steer the boat here and there. Small choices in life can direct us down the stream in an enjoyable, and helpful manner. It is when we fight the stream of life that we worry and get upset and hold grudges... and get headaches. It was a very good experience for me.

At one point, we ran out of gas. I got all the homeless, hitchhiker drifters to get out of the van and push it up a hill. That didn't quite work. They were lazy and tired and weak. I then picked the weakest, and smallest person (instead of me) to steer the van, like how a cocksman on a rowing crew is always the

smallest. I then realized that we needed some motivation, and did not want to get stranded in the desert.

“OK men! You have enlisted in this van, and I have not called on you or your great strength and have not asked anything of you, but I am asking you now. Be a man! Are we men or are we mice? Tell me! Men or mice?”

They were confused at first. Yes, it was an odd thing to say, but still a valid question.

“Men.”, they eventually said.

“I can’t hear you!” I yelled, suddenly casting off my hippy dread-appearance and replacing it with a drill sergeant. “Men?! or Mice?!”

“Men!” They yelled, picking up some vigor- forgetting about the sweat dripping from our brows into our eyes.

“Then lets push this mother F*ing van so that we’re not F*ing stranded in the F*ing desert and get the F* out of here! There is a gas station at the bottom of this hill! If we can just push it 100 yards uphill we will survive! Let’s go men! Show me you are Men!!!”

Again, I’m reminded of how, from far away, just as I looked crazy for shouting at an imaginary devil in the mirror, I probably looked pretty crazy, cussing and motivating people, trying to push a green, 1976 Volkswagen van, dreads whipping around erratically. With my dreads, I could have auditioned for Johnny Depp’s Pirates of the Carribean.

“Push God damnit!” Show me you are men!”

We pushed. We rocked it a little forward, and then I stuck my foot under the wheel. After it bounced off my foot, I yelled, “PUSH!!!” and then we went another half a foot or so.

“Mice or Men!?”

“Men!”

We kept going like this for maybe 15 minutes, a half foot at a time, until we finally made it the full 100 yards! We were saved!

Another interesting life-learning experience came when we got lost and drove about thirty minutes in the wrong direction. We didn't have smart phones or GPS, just a state map, and sometimes you don't really know you are lost until you come upon a street which can help you orient yourself. We had been driving for over half an hour with a dreadful feeling that we weren't going the right way. Finally, after we saw a cross-street name, we knew, and turned around, towards the right direction.

"Do you all feel how good it is to know we are going the right *direction*? Remember how bad and unsure and anxious and *not 'in the flow'* we felt when we weren't sure if we were going in the right direction? That is basically how I feel about sin and about living a less-than-ideal life. Sin just means 'missing the mark', it doesn't mean you are bad or evil- it just means you are not going in the right direction. This is how life should be. When you feel yourself full of worry, and wondering if you are going in the wrong direction, you probably are. It is important to look at the signs, use your common sense, pray, and figure out which direction you need to take your life. Then, even though it can be discouraging and difficult to turn around and inconvenient, it is worth it because once you are on the right track, you feel happy, satisfied, and glad to be back on track. You can then proceed with purpose, intention, and receive joy, knowing that you are flowing with life in the right direction, and not fighting the stream." I said that, while in some kind of trance of intuition, feeling good about life, feeling alive in a Jack Kerouac-kind of way. The druggy, alcoholic, drifter passengers nodded their heads in agreement, knowing better than I knew what it was like to feel 'preferable' directions in life vs. 'unpreferable' directions.

We were in the Church of Elon. Actually, others started to feel comfortable, and started sharing their own takes on philosophy and spirituality. We formed our own temporary tribe, and the Van united us. We were the 1976 Volkswagen Tribe. We weren't much, but we had each other.

I still gain comfort from this experience. It was helpful for me especially then, when I was feeling overly judged by my Conservative Evangelical Christian Tribe. I was in the helpful healing transition where I still used the Christian terms of “sin”, but started to see it with greater wisdom, and in terms of ‘direction’, not black and white, evil vs good thinking, hell and heaven- which is more-often preached.

We made it to my crazy hippy aunt’s house in Venice Beach, LA. There, Flaghead opened up a bit more about how he had went to jail for attempted manslaughter because he tried to run a man off the road with his pickup truck after he had found out he had been sleeping with his wife. He didn’t kill him, but wanted to.

While in prison, some men had to prove themselves within a certain group, so they tried to steal Flaghead’s porno magazine (one of the main currencies, along with cigarettes, which are important in Prison Society). Flaghead was stabbed by some kind of concealed knife. He reacted instinctually. He grabbed the nearest object, which happened to be a stainless steel water pitcher and hit the attacker. The pitcher happened to slice open a carotid artery, and the man bled to death before he could receive proper treatment. Flaghead was not bothered in prison after that.

He felt very sad, having extinguished a human life, after wanting to so badly. He said the rumors of ‘losing a piece of your soul’ after taking a human life were true. He lost the will to reintegrate into society, and instead became a drifter with a sole purpose in life to visit all fifty United States.

I dropped him off under a bridge in Oregon, as he requested. I felt very sad for him. His eyes were filled with pain and regret with the life he had chosen... and resigned to.

I eventually made it to Pullman, Washington, where I started a short physics research internship. I stayed with my friends at a house across from Washington State University. It

was there that I experienced some of the craziest, and most-epic parties.

Everybody dressed up as if it was Halloween. I chose to be Tarzan, since I knew I wouldn't always have dreads, and wanted to take advantage of that. So I got naked, and put a woolly, brown cloth around my loins and acted crazy and went up to all the pretty girls we were hanging out with and said, "You Jane. Me Tarzan." It was pretty funny.

We went to nightclubs with girls dancing in cages half-naked and soap bubbles which covered the entire club about six-feet tall. It was an interesting and sensual experience to feel lots of slippery bodies dancing around my near-naked skin.

We started the night with a disgusting drink which had been optimized for \$/alcohol ratio by an engineering student named Sal. It was named in his honor, the "Salinator" because it annihilates you for the night for a very cheap price. What you do, is take a 40 oz of Mickey's cheap, high alcohol beer, and drink about 1/4th of it quickly. You then take a disgusting flavor of choice of "MD"- mad dog cheap wine, and fill the 40 oz bottle up to the top with it, and drink the entire disgusting mix as fast as you can, and you are pretty messed up for an entire cheap night. It is dangerous, and could kill someone who doesn't weigh 175 pounds, like me.

We then went to some crazy frat parties and sorority parties and swung on things hanging from ceilings.

Being a drunk scientist, I thought it would be an interesting experiment to microwave a banana, and my scientific experiment determined that it made a very disgusting, smelly mess. I then felt bad for making a mess because my friends got mad for having to clean it up. In order to make it up to them, I found a futon bed frame in the dumpster and gave it to them as way to make amends, but as I was trying to fit it through the door unsuccessfully, it broke one of their windows. I felt worse, and so then slept outside on the wooden slats of a futon frame.

Sometimes in the course of life, we have fun, swimming with the stream, making good decisions; sometimes we make bad decisions, and swim against the stream, and sometimes we go with the stream and make bad decisions. The important thing is to always go with the flow and have fun, preferably making good decisions. It is better to make bad decisions, and have fun with the stream of friends and life, than it is to make safe decisions, but against the stream of life, sitting in a room by oneself worrying all the time, giving oneself a headache. Even better, one should have fun without breaking windows or microwaving bananas, but that is *still* preferable to living in worry, in consternation, with a headache. Which course is *more* sinful? The answer is not always black and white unless you are indoctrinated to think so.

Which lifestyle have you been indoctrinated to feel is more sinful: a lifestyle of sitting by oneself, worrying about things (like the environment for me, or maybe you are worried about liberals taking your guns...?) or a lifestyle of having fun while breaking windows? In the context of healing a headache, the verdict is clear: the next day, while everyone was reaching for Pedialyte, and cursing the Salinator and complaining of horrible hangover headaches, I was smiling, making breakfast, and feeling like my headache had actually improved by 2% and that life was looking good.

Chapter 13; Importance #26; M.S

Find a soul_mate healer friend

Obviously, it doesn't have to be black and white. It would be better to be able to relax, have fun, be in the flow, release good-feeling chemicals to ease the pain of a headache without breaking windows or microwaving bananas at your friend's house. How does one do that?

Well, continuing the theme of fun and relaxation from the last chapter (which I gave an importance of #3 by the way!) a mini-miracle happened to me, which convinced me that my headache truly was stress-related.

After studying and working over 70 hours a week, getting a B.S. in Chemistry, arranging details for moving to Hawai'i when I had never been there and didn't know anyone... I eventually got off the plane, and for one week didn't have many responsibilities before starting my Ph.D. in chemistry. The miracle was: for one week, *my headache was gone!* So, technically, the headache did not last five years, it lasted about two and a half years, had a one week break, and then came back for another two and a half years. Why?

There could be a few physical reasons- I could have gotten better sleep that week. The humidity is different in Hawai'i. The temperature is different. The sun actually can be seen, so perhaps I had some SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder that I didn't know about (a very commonly diagnosed problem in the Pacific Northwest). Mostly, however, I think I was just continuing the 'flow', and happy mentality from the previous chapter, but in a more constructive, less destructive manner. I still had the mentality of moving fast, and with purpose, but with a purpose of just -being-. Instead of looking for homeless hitchhikers to help out and looking to have a fun time with friends, I just absorbed the beautiful culture, weather, and surroundings that is the paradise of Hawai'i without judgment, without over-analyzation, and just accepting what *is*. I focused on helping myself for once. I let myself go and be what it wanted to be. If I wanted to go to the beach, I went to the beach.

If I wanted to bicycle around the whole island to check it out, I did that. If I wanted to eat out, I did that. I met a few new students. There were 11 Ph.D. chemistry students who entered the program at the same time as me, and, like most universities where the completion rate is about 15%, only two of us actually finished the Ph.D., myself included. But in the beginning, looking around a table of eleven of us, there was no way to tell which ones would make it. Some of the most-collected and rich and preppy Type-A students dropped out. Some of the sloppy, eccentric students made it. I hung out with some of them and became friends with them, but mostly I slept in, ate well, exercised, drank lots of water, enjoyed the beauty around me, and loved life for the first time in a long time.

Each day, instead of my first thought being "yup, the headache is still there, my Bunion in the Brain", my first thought was, "Wow! It's gone! Thank you God! I can hear myself think! I love this! I can't believe it!"

But alas, it was just a brief glimpse of heaven for me. Real life came crashing in: my obese, 60-year-old female retired

Verizon-working roommate with diabetes and dementia and paranoia issues occasionally locked me out of the apartment and threatened to call the cops,

“Common, let me in. I got lots of important exams to study for which will determine how many undergraduate classes I will have to retake- this is important. I need a place to sleep. I need my study materials.” I said.

“Youa took mah Mickey Mouse watch. Youa theif- no trusta you”.

Oh common- what the F- I don't have time for this shit*

“Listen to me. I *didn't* take your Mickey Mouse watch. You probably just misplaced it because the place is a mess. I can help you clean. I can buy you a new one. I promise I didn't steal your watch. We can talk about this later, but *please* let me in right now. I really need to sleep.”

Eventually, after stupid bantering like this, the door slowly cracked open, and I studied and went to bed... and failed all my tests except for the hardest two physical chemistry tests. This delayed me in the program, which was stressful. Studying was stressful. Taking the tests and starting classes was stressful. Living with a crazy roommate was stressful, even though it was probably the only place in Hawai'i that was only \$200 per month.

So the headache came back when my stressful life came back, and I don't think it was a coincidence. I learned that for me, if you have a chronic headache because of your life, you need a new life...easier said than done. Of course, if I could become enlightened quickly, I could just laugh at how ridiculous my roommate was, and study without letting it stress me out, and control **how I react to life** since I couldn't control my circumstances.

At least I no longer felt totally helpless, and that I was destined to have the headache for the rest of my life. It brought back *hope*. The despair had still not been released from Pandora's Box. As long as that sucker stayed in there, I wouldn't be as much at risk for suicide, and hating life. The **dread** of

visualizing a life with a non-stop headache is what made me suicidal and depressed. But since I had that glorious, wonderful week break from it, I knew that it **could** be defeated, and that I could hypothetically be a happy person again one day, living without the mind-hijacking, nonstop siren that is a chronic headache.

But the headache *did* come back. The screw that is life, slowly came back and tightened down on my head.

A few days later, I was walking down the street and a beautiful Asian woman my age stopped me, and asked tentatively, "Oh, are you ok?"

"I think so... why?" I replied, both exhilarated someone looking like her would actually want to talk to me, a lonely, new person on an island in the middle of the Pacific, and also a little unsure of my response, given all that was going on.

"It just looks like you have blood on your shirt." she explained.

I turned around, "Oh that!" I guffawed, "that is just a splotch of balsamic vinegar!" We both laughed, me in my characteristically, too-loud guffaw, and her with a cute mousey, quiet, polite laugh with a big smile, head slightly tipped forward.

"That's nice of you to notice," I said, "If we were like in New York City or something, I could be bleeding and nobody would even care."

She laughed, "Actually, I am *from* New York city."

"Oh I'm sorry!" I said clumsily. "I mean, I'm not sorry you're from New York, I love New York, I mean, I don't actually think New Yorkers are all that callous."

"That's ok. I know what you mean. So are you a cook? Is that why you have balsamic vinegar on your shirt?"

"You could call me a cook. Except, I'm just starting a Ph.D. in chemistry and so I cook mostly inedible things with toxic ingredients, but it is quite similar. We even call the procedure for a particular chemical reaction a 'recipe'."

We talked like this off and on, and it literally felt like a romantic comedy movie- the way two people destined for each other bump into each other. Other than her, I have rarely ever felt like I was drawn to someone with 'love at first sight'.

We walked the same direction for a while, and then went different ways.

Shoot! I didn't get her number!

I ran back and said, "Excuse me, what is your name by the way?"

"Sunny En", was the response, how appropriate, because I feel so happy and warm near her! She's amazing!

"I'll see you around", I said, instead of asking for a number, lacking the courage.

"I have a feeling we will", she replied with a knowing smile.

And then she walked away, and I stood and stared and felt devastated that I had let my true love walk away...

However, after not seeing her for a few weeks on campus, as hoped, I did something smart for once in my romantic life; I used my intelligence to find her and chase her, instead of only reserving it for chemistry. I had gathered her name and major, so I made a cheesy and mysterious note playing on nuclear chemistry parallels between the sun and her name, and my degree and left it in her graduate student mailbox, except while at the mailbox I had forgotten her last name!

I stood there looking at about 40 names in small, slotted mailboxes... Another graduate student asked me if he could help.

"I'm looking for a student to drop off something, and I forget her last name. I only remember that she mentioned she was half Japanese and half Taiwanese." *and that God had mixed those two races in the most-perfect combination ever!*

"Well, En is Japanese and so is Satoshi, so it might be one of those."

"Thanks! Yeah! I think En sounds familiar!"

In a week or so, she emailed me and we talked on the phone and we reconnected! Later, I would realize that the reason why I had felt such a strong desire to be near her is because she is probably a soul-mate, and would become my healer, and ended up being the only person who guided me through the process of healing my headache. The rest of the world was foreign and rough to me. The rest of the world ran its own busy race with its own problems. Only Sunny cared enough to see that I needed help, and stepped out of her own world to mingle it beautifully with mine. Sunny En was the one, glimmering, shiny pearl among swine, like a star in the night!

Chapter 14; Importance #5; MS

*Reiki. The scientist in me cringes to
admit that that this actually helped me*

After meeting Sunny a few times at a café, a talk on U. Hawai'i (UH) campus, hike, or an interesting service at a wide variety of church or temples, I mentioned my extreme struggle with my headache.

"I do Reiki. Would you be open to trying Reiki?" she asked.

"What's Reiki?" I asked. I had never heard of it.

"Well.." she smiled and laughed cutely, wondering how to best summarize something so profound and deep to her into words, "It is a healing technique where a Reiki practitioner lays hands lightly near or on a person to help the person heal themselves. The story goes that a man was on a journey walking in Japan and stubbed his toe so badly he couldn't walk. He touched his foot, just like, you know when a Mother runs to a child and touches an injury, and it immediately feels better and calms the child?"

"Yeah"

“Yeah! That is essentially Reiki. This man did this, and healed himself, and then came down from the mountain and trained people, and every practitioner sort of gets the ‘gift’ of Reiki, traced back to this man.” she explained.

“Hmmm, well it doesn’t sound scientific at all” I said doubtfully. “But at this point, I’ve tried MRI’s, doctors, and as much basic information I could find online, so I’m open to anything... I *do* remember my Mom healing me in this way and seeing other children run up to parents for comfort after skinning their knees or some ‘owie’ and then, yeah, they just sort of lay their hands on the injury lightly, and sometimes kiss it and then the kid feels better. I’m sure a lot of it scientifically just comes from the child *thinking* that the parent has some magical healing ability, and that the expectation and intention of the child and mother psychologically *calms* the child... but maybe there is more. I don’t know. Science can’t even probe into the spiritual realm... and I *do* believe in prayer, and it sounds similar to prayer.”

Sunnys face beamed and smiled, not just her mouth, but somehow her whole face smiled... silently. I had only seen that with my wise grandfather who was soft-spoken and didn’t say much with words, but who had a powerful, wise presence. He would often sit on his chair and look at nature, and smile like that. He would knowingly smile like that if he heard something he knew to be true and touched him deeply. He had a calming, wise, silent presence that I hadn’t seen in anyone else except Sunny, just then.

“Yes. Exactly. Intention is very important in Reiki, and it can be compared to prayer, although without words, and it is more like an open channeling process and balancing of energy.”

“Hmmf, well you lost me on channeling and energy, and as a scientist I’m not allowed to even entertain such things, but Christianity is a form of spirituality which *is* more accepted in society, and therefore, given more of a ‘pass’ by scientists, presumably because many of them are Christians, or have several

Christian friends and family members. What you mentioned sort of helps possibly explain something I have always been confused about in the Bible. I always wondered; why is it that Jesus seems to almost always say, 'your faith has healed you' after he heals someone, and is similar to that phrase, 'work out your own salvation'? I always thought that it was God healing the person through Jesus, but if that is true, why would he say '*your* faith has healed you'? Maybe it's because of this psychological effect that we see in children who go from total distress and panic and pain from an injury to peace, calm, and comfort in the arms of a loving parent? The child believes full-heartedly with 'faith like a child', that the parent can make them feel better, and so then no matter what the parent does, as long as **some effort and intention** is made by the parent, then the child feels better. The faith of the child has healed him or her! Your faith has healed you. If I believe you can heal me, then you can."

"Yes!" she said excitedly and quiet, with my grandfather's beaming face again.

"Well, then. Let's try it! Thank you!...and I better believe that it can work, I guess!"

We walked to a beautiful Japanese garden at UH next to a traditional Japanese Teahouse. In this special place, there is a Pink Cassia tree planted by the Prince and Princess of Japan in 1961. There is also a living Bo Tree that is a direct descendant of the tree which Buddha meditated under while obtaining Enlightenment in 288 B.C.!

We found a nice place on the grass, and Sunny asked me, "Oh shoot, I didn't bring any means to light a candle. I don't suppose with you being a Chemist, you might have a lighter on you or some manner of lighting a fire?"

"Yes, I do, actually!" I rarely carried a lighter with me, but I might have recently smoked a small cigar.

"Great! So, let's meditate here first for a while, and then you just lay down here, and we can start with a basic Reiki

attunement!” she said in her positive, sing-song voice, seemingly excited to be able to help me, which surprised me.

I laid down and she lit a candle and I closed my eyes and for about an hour she put her open hands near my head, and other regions of my body, sometimes occasionally touching me lightly.

Is that healing energy I feel in the form of heat and tingling, or is it just heat from her hands and some psychological reaction to it? I don't know, but I like it! I really like her and am attracted to her in many ways, and I haven't had any friends in Hawai'i offer to help me with my headache problem, so I'm just happy she is here with me and offering to help me. I'm no longer alone. I'm no longer fighting the headache on my own...I'm no longer thinking of it as a 'fight' either, but an imbalance, or a part of me which needs to be helped, not destroyed or harmed. It is not something to hate, but something to embrace...not something to show rage towards... but, if anything, pity.

The first Reiki session, although in an amazing place, had several mosquitoes at the time, and it caused us to be a bit distracted. Other than that it was both a very natural and boring experience, but also a profound, relaxing, and loving experience.

If there is a God, I sometimes wonder what people look like from a birds-eye view, like from God's view, if God were to be thought of in the traditional sense, existing above humans on some heavenly plane. Would he smile more at the people busily zooming around in traffic, honking? Would he smile at the scientists stuck in the lab at midnight, trying to uncover his secrets? Would he smile at all the big machines tearing down swaths of rainforests at a rate of 11 football-fields per minute? Would he smile at people looking bored or arguing in a line at a store? What would he think of seeing two squirrels chasing each other? What thoughts does he have when he sees dragonflies chasing each other? What does he think when he sees two humans who aren't running around like chickens with their heads cut off, and instead, are just lying in the grass, enjoying the

sounds of birds and dragonfly wings, and frogs, and enjoying the sunlight scattered on their arms?

There are two people there. One is laying down, eyes closed, relaxed, with a very slight, barely perceptible smile. The other is a more beautiful, healthy-looking, happier homo sapien with long, shiny, black hair, with eyes closed, a barely perceptible smile, and hands outreached to the sick, less-healthy, scruffy man on the grass. Does God take more pleasure in the incense of the smokestacks built with capitalism and science and engineering? Or does God take more pleasure in the scent of a candle, and seeing two people pausing, relaxing, and enjoying each other's company, like a family of lions basking in the sun in Africa?

Laying there on the grass, envisioning what I looked like from above, I thought: *What values have I been taught to value? What values and actions have I been **told** that God values? What values and actions does God **actually** value? I guess I generally think of Him as a child looking at an antfarm. If I were that child, I would want all my ant-friends to be happy. That's it. I want my ant-friends to be happy! Do what you will, just be happy! Enjoy this life I have given you! I can't wait to see what you will do with it!*

Chapter 15; Importance #47; B

*Glasses vs contacts? Could it really
just be my glasses' fault?*

A month or so later, I broke my glasses. I left the crazy Mickey Mouse lady who had diabetes and loved McDonalds and seemed to only have two things in common with me: a love of the Nature Conservancy and the painter Salvador Dali. Living with her was like being stuck in a Dali painting.

I decided to buy a cheap four-person tent and live in the woods. I had lived in a 1976 Volkswagen van for a year in Bellingham, and enjoyed that experiment, so figured living in a tent in Hawai'i would be fun too, and save money, since UH teaching assistants only receive \$14,400 per year, and it had been that level for over five years before I got there, and is still that level five years after I left. My adviser said that they had tried to work with the administration to increase it but that the paperwork was too difficult, a trend I would quickly see permeated all of UH and the Hawaiian Islands in general.

When you are in a dark tent it is easy to break your glasses, so I found an eye doctor near Kapiolani Blvd. I hadn't had my eyes checked in two years anyway.

During the course of the eye exam he asked, “How are you doing?”

“Pretty good, thanks” was my response. It had become a habit for me to lie about how I was doing. When you are passing a friend in a hall, there’s not much time to tell someone how you *really* are, and I didn’t like talking to people about my headache. Most people who I saw every day didn’t even know that I daily suffered with a horrible headache. I would sometimes look at people with envy- either people I knew while having a conversation with them, or strangers in marketplaces I would watch.

Look at them. I would think, everyone is busy walking around, buying ice-cream, having nice lives without me. I wish I could be them. Look at them. Their biggest problems are money and relationships, and getting upset about a parking space. I wish I could only have money problems, relationship problems, and parking space problems.

“No problems with your eyes; redness, irritation? No head discomfort or pain or headaches from the way the classes sit on the nose or touch the ears?”

Wait, whaaat? Glasses can cause headaches? How could I miss that in my research? I snapped quickly out of my reverie.

“Actually, I do have headaches pretty bad; daily actually.” I replied, happy to have found someone competent who actually cared about me and might be able to help me, other than Sunny.

That would be awesome if it was as simple as that!

I ended up buying lots of contacts and a pair of glasses as a backup. He fitted the glasses in order to rest lightly, with the headaches in mind. He ended up being a little creepy and gave me lots of colored contacts and tried to convince me to buy lots of colored contacts.

“They girls lovem’ ya know what I mean?” he said with a wink and a nudge. “The girls love seeing a guy with green or blue eyes, or how about grey?”

“Uhhh, no thanks...” I said, a bit saddened that he just wanted to make money like everyone else, and didn’t really have my best interests in mind... not like Sunny.

I still left hopeful that I might have found the source of all my problems.

However, after a few days with only contacts, I didn’t notice any improvement in my headache. There might have been a 2% improvement. Luckily, since moving to Hawai’i, my headache seemed to improve slowly every month.

I don’t know what it is about Hawai’i. It is a special place; magical and with ‘mana’, some people say. But so far the only two locals I had much interaction with was a crazy, fat old Asian lady with diabetes, and Mickey Mouse obsessions, and a nice, old white man who appeared to care about me, and helped me a little, but was pretty creepy. Looking back on it, I think he felt he could open up with me a bit and be honest because he was white and I am tan (from Native American and French Canadian ancestry), but also white.

After crying at nighttime for the injustices done to the planet (and other races) by my race, I welcomed being a minority for once. I finally started to understand why certain races were more-likely to sit with each other during High School lunches etc. It wasn’t that they were purposely being exclusionary, like I thought. When you are a minority, you just naturally feel more comfortable with people of your own race; they usually end up having similar backgrounds and experiences as you, and it is more comfortable to be open and honest with them... even if being open and honest is a little creepy.

Chapter 16; Importance #49; B

Talking to a dentist about headaches.

TMJ? Grinding at night? Mouth guard?

A month or so later, with the glasses not being a silver-bullet cure like I was hoping, and with the colored contact 'demo pack' also not garnering me a flock of beautiful local Asian, Hawaiian, and Polynesian women, I was a bit bummed. However, my spirits were still high, much higher than when I had hit rock-bottom in the Puget Sound, where I almost sank to the bottom of the ocean. I still improved a very small amount in one month's time, and it might have been the lack of glasses, or from another Reiki Session with Sunny. *God, I'm so thankful for her.*

I went to an on-campus free dentist appoint. They actually have a decent medical and dental school at UH. The dental students get to observe and practice on students in a full dental office set up above one of the cafeterias.

I was shocked that the old, wise-looking, and intense master dentist asked me similar questions as the optometrist.

"How are you doing?"

"Pretty good, thanks", was my automatic reply.

“Do you have any tooth soreness, sensitivity to icecream or cold or hot, clicking in the jaw, grinding at night, any head troubles at all?”

“No... no, well actually, sometimes I feel a pop in the back joint of my jaw, below my ear, and I *do* get daily headaches.”

“Hmm, let me look” He looked around and told a new student nearby, “See how he has nice teeth, and nothing is worn-down? That means he doesn’t grind his teeth. If he did, that could be a cause for his headaches, and popping and I would recommend a mouth-guard, but he doesn’t grind his teeth, so there isn’t much we can do about that.”

“So just try to avoid very chewy foods, like hard bread, and not too many nuts because lots of chewing might give you a small amount of TMJ, but I don’t think you have TMJ or grinding issues. Come back if it gets worse. Your bite looks good. I would be concerned if the teeth did not fit together well when you bite, but they do.”

Wow! Good to know! Grinding and teeth problems and TMJ can cause headaches too! I’ll have to be aware of that and chew softer foods for a month and see if that helps anything! I like this guy!

He finished cleaning and inspecting my teeth, and then as I was leaving told me, “You have very excellent teeth! Very clean! Very good! How often do you brush your teeth?”

“About once a month”

“What? No!” he said, and then he quietly said to his assistant, “Don’t listen to him, he is lying. He must brush and floss every day. His teeth and gums are perfect.”

“No dude!” I said, a bit angry, and not remembering the last time in my life that anyone accused me of lying, “I’m not lying! Why would I lie about something like that? I eat a vegan diet and don’t drink soda or eat candy, like most people. Dentistry is merely a compensation for humanity’s unnatural diet, man!”

I wish I could tell him I am homeless and live in a tent, then maybe he would believe me, but I must keep it secret in case it gets me in trouble.

“No. Not possible.” was his reply.

Once again, I left feeling both thankful for the advice which might help my headache, but also weirded-out by the interaction, in a bad way. I like weirdness... but not in that way.

Also once again, I had high hopes for finding a possible silver-bullet, but only noticed a slight, 2% improvement in the headache after a month of avoiding ‘chewy’ foods, and that was the normal trajectory anyway. My popping noise behind my ear eventually went away, which was nice.

Chapter 17: Importance #11: BMS

Learning to listen to my body

All of these memories involving common sense (to make sure I'm hydrated, and don't have glasses which pinch my head or jaw problems) reminds me of an out-of-the ordinary, but poignant experiment in learning to listen to my body.

A thin-as-a-stick hippie-hot female friend of mine who's bushy, wild, and unkept, light-brown hair gave an oddly-attractive contrast to the thin frame, like a Dr. Seuss tree approached me one day with a question I've only been asked once in my life. By "hippie-hot", I mean that I thought she was really hot in a hippie-kind-of-way, but the general public might have more of a reaction of, "I need to walk away from this homeless person".

She asked me, "Can you do me a favor?"

"Sure!", I replied. My philosophy in life used to be endearingly similar to a Jim Carrey character who decided to only say "yes" to everything in life, no matter how crazy it was.

"My really cool and liberal 'Understanding Your Body' professor wants us to close our eyes and **shower naked with a platonic friend** of the opposite sex. I'm really excited about it and was hoping you would want to do that with me. It's supposed to

really help you feel both self-aware of your body, and another nearby body. It should be fun! What do you think?"

At first I just thought, *Awww she only thinks of us as platonic friends...* but then I realized she had just said the words "shower naked" and "you" and "sex" and "fun" and I got really excited about the class project, and also confused as to whether she was making an advance towards me at the same time.

Hey women! Men are simple beasts! You can't confuse us with things like "you are a platonic friend" and "I want to take a naked shower with you"! I know lots of men with a wide range of IQ, and when it comes to romance and intentions, it's best to talk to us like we are all dogs with simple, short, easy-to-understand commands, like "sit", "stay", and "yes. you boyfriend. me girlfriend.". And don't think we are any kind of super-smart dog breed like some kind of German Sheppard, either. We can wax poetically and intelligently about economics and business and politics and music trivia and all sorts of interests but as soon as it comes to romance we suddenly transform into a scared, confused little Chihuahua which just needs to know whether a dog toy is ok to hump or not.

And I mean all that in the least sexist-way possible. It's our problem, not yours. It's me, not you, baby.

Anyway, my response was classic, and from another favorite Jim Carrey movie of mine, *Ace Ventura*. Just as Ace was asked if he could get a blow job instead of paid, I said, "Geee... let me think. Ummm, sure!".

Like a creepy Casual Encounters Craigslist personals ad, we awkwardly and excitedly arranged details as to who was "hosting" and how we would ensure that we didn't see each other naked or touch each other at all.

At the appointed time, I went to her place and undressed in her bathroom. *I can't believe I am doing this! I haven't even touched a boob before, this is like I am skipping second base and going straight for a triple! This is awesome! I hope she touches me or cheats and peeks. How will I know if she cheats and peeks?*

Should I occasionally peek to see if she is peaking? But then she will know that I peeked and think that I'm a creeper. Oh no! Game Theory come to my rescue now! What should I do! I only watched "A Beautiful Mind" once! Damn-it!

She got undressed and waited in the shower **naked** and then said in a really excited tone (like 'here we goo!'), "OOOHHhhh- Kayyy-ayyy I'm Reaaaadyyyy".

Oh shit! I'm getting a boner! I can't do this. I can't do this! What if she sees! What if she bumps into it! She'll call me a pervert or report me for sexual harassment or something! Think ugly fat woman! Think ugly fat woman! There is NOT a super-hot hippie standing naked in the shower waiting for me! Doh! No! It's worse now! Dumbass! This is a bad idea. Bad idea!

Millions of years of procreation somehow came through for me and I found myself nervously putting a white towel around my naked and shaking body. *I can't pause. I have to just go in and do it, or else she'll think I'm purposely getting aroused or jacking off or something.* So I closed my eyes and dove in. I felt my way around the room to the shower, like we practiced and she apparently did a good job of keeping to the far side of the shower, because I didn't feel her touch me, even though I looked like an ant with a very sensitive and long antennae protruding and searching.

I closed the door.

"Are you in?", she asked?

"Yeah", *Oh good, if she had to ask, that means that she hasn't seen me yet, right?* It's funny how I had so desperately been thinking about this moment and hoping she would open her eyes and it would turn into a freaky love-fest, but now I even more desperately wanted us both to keep our word and keep our eyes closed.

"You're breathing hard", she said, sounding amused.

"S-s-so are you", I replied. *How is this professor not fired?*

"Are you shuddering?"

“Sh-sh-shaking, not s-s-shuddering” I will never make fun of a stutterer again.

“Wow! You are really taking this body awareness thing seriously! I like it! How do you feel?”

I couldn't reply. I was completely floored and paralyzed with feelings. Have you ever felt the hair on the back of your neck get prickly and then turn around and see someone staring at you? Have you ever had to sit in close quarters with people, say, in a DMV or some boring place, and first had to sit next to a really obese person eating a candy bar while making disgusting noises? You try to move over, and apologize for touching their bulging hips with yours, but they, being completely used to it, or not even feeling it, don't seem to mind and seem to invade your personal space more than humanly possible. From far away, you look like a sunflower trying to escape the suffocating shade of a tree.

Contrast that to the mesmerizing, intoxicating feeling of when, thank God, by a twist of luck, the slob's number gets called, and leaves, and then a beautiful person walks by, bites her lip, glances around, and, seeing no other seats, is forced to sit down next to you. Now you become a sunflower attracted to the light. You notice lots of silly things, like an untied shoelace, and think it is the cutest thing... you notice matching eye shadow to earrings to eye color, even though you're not impressed with make-up and accessories... you're fascinated with unique facial features, like a thin smile, or light and shadows dancing on the neck. You have your arm within one centimeter of their arm and feel like your arms are magnets which are drawing themselves together. Again, the hairs stand up, but this time, not in revulsion, or awkwardness, but pure attraction and excitement and desire.

Jolts go up and down the spine as the chicken skin spreads. The term 'perk your ears up' seems to ring true as you feel like your ears actually are trying to lift and are activated in an alert pose. The eyes dilate and widen to gain more information. Eyebrows rise to let in more light. You start sweating, and the heart beats stronger and faster. You feel like

you have been living in a thick fog, or dark mist your whole life, and all of a sudden you see everything crystal clear. You notice dust particles happily dancing to a beat, in sunlight. You notice an odd crease in clothing and have to use all your will power not to make it smooth. The whole world outside of you and your muse seems to rush in a blur, but the space near you and your muse is frozen in time and you are aware of everything. Time freezes. Everything is... perfect.

The buzzing in the head, the amusingly pleasant nausea in the stomach, the prickly neck and arms, the warm, stinging hands...it is all intoxicating and stunning, and overwhelming.

"I f-f-feel like... like... I *feel* you and myself more...I feel tingly" I eventually replied, unable to explain it, and also wanting to give her a satisfying answer so we could finish and I could go.

"Yeah, to-o-tally!", she said in her low, relaxed, luxurious voice, "I know what you mean! I like, feel aware. First I felt self-conscious, like in an embarrassed way, but now I'm just, like, *conscious*, and aware. I feel like I am thinking or noticing parts of my body I've never thought of before."

"Yeah" I replied, thankful that her voice was what I remembered it to be, and that having a normal conversation helped keep my mind off of the fact that I was in a shower naked with someone.

"I got the water's temperature ready before, so it shouldn't be too cold, but it might be a bit shocking. Ready?"

Under the circumstances, I would actually prefer a cold shower... but ok. "Ok, thanks, sure", I said, politely.

The water *was* stunning. Another sense explosion! I was afraid one of us would slip or bump into each other, but that didn't happen. We were just two blind platonic friends with heightened senses feeling water all around us. I didn't actually get that much water on me. I tried to hug the corner and door as much as possible.

I could hear lots of squishy sounds, perhaps from her feet, or as she washed her arm pits or wiped away water from

her hopefully closed eyes. *She hasn't giggled uncontrollably yet, so she probably hasn't opened her eyes.* She did laugh a little, "Wow! This is fun! What a trip! Can you believe we are doing this!" she exclaimed.

Meanwhile, with the normalizing and consoling effects of a conversation gone, and replaced with more sensations and squishy sounds which may or may not have disgusted me or enthralled me at the same time, I started to feel even more overwhelmed and started breathing heavier and faster. Every second which passed risked an awkward touching, which would result in us opening our eyes, and a whole lot of unknown. I kept seeing a school newspaper frontline picture of me in handcuffs with a headline which read, "Perverted chemistry grad student touches girl with penis in shower without consent".

"Y-y-yeah, this is awesome. J-j-just what I was hoping for. I learned a lot, but I th-thi-think I sh-should go n-n-now." I said, fumbling for the shower door, trying to remember if it swung in or out.

"Awww, really? No! Sta-a-ay!"

"No. Yep. I'm cool. That was good. Gotta go though, sorry. Maybe later." *when we're married.*

I stumbled loudly and quickly to the saving grace of the towel and was thankful to have sight again. It was probably the only time I was thankful to be greeted by cold air after a shower. I dried off and shook my dreads quickly like a dog... like a very shaky, confused Chihuahua that was tied down and forced to be given a stuffed animal toy lap dance, but unable to move and enjoy it. Simple commands! I need simple commands!

Chapter 18; Importance #34; BMS

How does stress manifest in my

body? ... tight neck for me

In some way, that is an experience I wouldn't wish on any Evangelical Christian male trying to stay a virgin until marriage... well except maybe Pat Robertson. That dude needs to read this book by the way. I'm sure anyone who attributes the death of people by Hurricane Katrina as an act of God to punish us for our liberal sins has a lot of guilt and headaches, and needs to learn to let go. I actually met a lot of Evangelical Christians who struggled with depression. It is a natural response. How would you feel if almost everyone around you is going to burn in hell for eternity unless **you** save them by awkwardly bringing up Jesus at every possible moment?

"Man, I'm so tired right now."

"My Lord Jesus Christ was tired when he carried his cross. That's why, whenever I feel like that, I *just* remember the verse, '...For my yolk is easy, and my burden is light...' and I *just* give him all my worries and he *just* gives me strength and 'lifts me up on eagle's wings'."

Evangelical Christians say the word "just" a lot. It is a manipulative word.

“Actually, I’m tired because I stayed up till 3 am getting drunk with friends at a strip joint.”

“Jesus ate dinner with prostitutes...”

“I’m sure he did. Sounds like a nice guy, but will you please shut the fuck up about Jesus? God damnit! I’m not going to hell and I’m not going to convert to Christianity! I know you’re more addicted to porn than me- proly cuz you repress a lot more shit than me.”

“...”

These are the kind of stranger-than-fiction hilarious conversations which happen every day. No matter what dark secret you have that burdens you or guilt or repression that wears you down, the fact is, most of us live with chronic stress in the modern world, and that stress “manifests” itself in the body, and you need to find out what that is in order to eliminate your headaches.

You can read into the word “manifest” in a spiritual, new-agey way if that’s your bag baby, but I mean it in a more common sense, scientific, cause-and-effect manner, like “I feel guilty about polluting the environment, so live in a tent that I put on wooden pallets I found in a dump and sleep on a pillow of dirty clothes, so I often wake up with cricks in the neck and back, and these muscle spasms press on nerves and constrict blood flow to the brain, giving a Category #1 headache- lack of nutrients.”

Frequent aches on your back, neck, and head can also be a sign that you have chronically high cortisol levels (a chemical released in response to stress), and so this can cause a Category #2 headache:

“...Signs That You’re Having High Cortisol Levels...”

You get frequent aches on your head and back.

A prolonged high cortisol level depletes your adrenal glands. The depletion of adrenal glands raises the level of prolactin. Your body’s sensitivity to pain thus increases. At the slightest pain infliction, body muscles will start to ache. High cortisol levels also increases the pain sensitivity in your brain. As

a result, you start to get frequent headaches at the slightest sting.” This is from a blogger, Simon, on *enkvillage*, who stated something corroborated by research, but put in a simple, and easy-to-understand manner, I think.

This is a rare, and exciting point that all my hippy, New Age friends, and hard-core atheist, scientific friends can all agree on: Your Thoughts Have Power, and Affect Your Body. A friend of mine, Eve-man, in Hawai’i, used to have a voicemail greeting which said ominously, “Your words have power. Choose them wisely.” I thought that was a clever way of sharing his ideology, and encouraging people to not leave annoying, rambling messages at the same time!

Don’t just be careful what you wish for, or speak... be careful what you think! The more you think about something, the more your neurons in your brain physically rearrange themselves to make those thoughts more easily accomplished. You can literally get “stuck in a rut” in your thoughts, so if you are depressed, it is partly (in addition to genetic predispositions) because you keep thinking of the same, sad ideas until that becomes second nature and your default state of being. This is one reason why people can become addicted (to literally anything) and want to escape, but can’t... they have hard-wired their brain to keep thinking certain things and it takes several days (some researchers say a minimum of 66 purposeful days) of new thoughts to reprogram different, more helpful habits, and neural connections.

So like Pat Robertson, I programmed my brain to be addicted to thoughts of *worry* (for me, I was more chronically worried about the environmental state of the planet, not all of my friends going to hell, or drugs, sex and rock and roll bringing about Armageddon, but the neural ruts and chronic resulting stress is the same). “Pat Robertson and I are neural-rut, worry-buddies”- that would make a nice, ironic hipster T-shirt. As an aside, I feel a little guilty making fun of Pat Robertson, and having the audacity to claim to know what thoughts go on in his head,

but he, like many Evangelical Christians, have the audacity to claim to know the thoughts of **God**, so I'll let the reader determine which is more ridiculous.

Both your physical environment (the bite of your teeth, glasses, pillow, bed etc) *and* your **thoughts** can give you stress and muscle fatigue, which can cause headaches. I happened to chronologically try to first eliminate the physical variables, and I recommend doing so for others as well, but now we are starting to shift into the rest of this book which will deal more with the very tricky *psychological* aspects of stress, and how to manage and decrease it in order to slowly heal a chronic headache. This is much more difficult. Before we can go on though, we need to self-assess and learn to listen to our body (and mind).

How else have I learned how to listen to my body other than taking showers with acquaintances? I think it is one of those things that is so obvious it is easy for me to over-think. It really boils down to what I consider the most important chapter, chapter 1. I had to honestly assess myself and ask myself where *I* thought the root of my headaches and stress lay. I missed some things, but overall, I was fairly correct.

Sometimes with the busy-ness (business?) of life, I feel like my brain is constantly filled with the thoughts of *other* people. Other people are always talking to me, or worse, *at me*. Advertisers are each paid millions to invade my head. Movies, books, TV-shows are on my mind, and subconsciously telling me how to act and think and telling me what is "normal". Family life, is sort of like being caught in a real-life sitcom, where I have a certain role to play, and the audience is laughing with canned laughs in my head- sometimes laughing with me, and sometimes laughing at me. Then I play a certain role at work or school. How many seconds do I have each day to just sit and *be*? That is what I like about prayer and meditation or just deep thinking, and that is why I lived in the woods.

Whenever I felt stressed or that my thoughts were no longer my own, I started running to a quiet place, preferably in

nature, or outside on the roof of a building, and I just sat and listened to myself. Or sometimes I would just think about anything I wanted to think about- get it all out, stretch, relax, and then go back in, even if it was just ten minutes. I did landscaping for a guy in his 80's who said that he didn't want to smoke, but back in the 1930's – 1960's, the only way a person could get 5-10 minute breaks while at work was to go on a "smoke break", so he picked up smoking. Now that smoking isn't as accepted in society, it would be beneficial if our advisers allowed frequent 10-minute "brain breaks", and some businesses and schools are actually having some great success and increase in productivity and overall well-being (for the workers and students) with this!

Sometimes I also like to sit or lay down comfortably in a quiet, dark room and think (or as yoga-hippies say "put consciousness into") every muscle in my body from my toes to my head, and simply self-assess each muscle, and see what it is currently feeling. If there is a dull pain, such times as these might be the only chance I get to notice the pain because the rest of the day I am too distracted to notice it.

For me and other headache sufferers I talk to, chronic neck pain is a really common occurrence. We just happen to "manifest" our pain with neck pain, which can easily lead to headaches. Other people have high stress which leads to high and chronic cortisol, which leads to irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, and lots of belly-pain-issues. I wonder if Kurt Cobain, who struggled with depression due to pain in his belly suffered from something like this where chronic stress was the main root cause (I think he and I actually chronically worried about some of the same things! That's one reason why I like his music!). I meet lots of people who suffer with various pains in their belly, and they seem a bit offended when I suggest they learn to relax and decrease stress in their body and lives, but if their doctors haven't found a cause after years of trying... I'm probably actually right, and modern medicine has been slow to catch up with this line of thinking, but it is slowly going in that direction.

I've also noticed that I get more zits, itchy skin problems, mouth sores, and colds and flus when I'm stressed (and I get more irritable and depressed, and have odd food cravings and drink too much alcohol). These are pretty annoying, but much better than a headache! Now I am very grateful when I get them because they are signals for me to search for stressors in my life, and look for more opportunities to relax and reduce stressors, before they cause a headache.

In conclusion, with this lesson, I basically learned to be honest with myself. I have tried various techniques along the way and there are a wide range of self-help books, but for me it's more about having an overall, brutally honest attitude about myself. I need to stop making excuses. Stop shirking responsibility. Stop distracting myself. Stop repressing. Once a day, I need to look at myself in the mirror (in a physical mirror, or the mirror of meditation and reflection) and say, "Come on dude, what's your problem? Not sleeping enough? OK. Duly noted. I'll work on that for tomorrow. Stressed from thinking about that same stress-increasing thought 1,000 times today? Ok, I should probably deal with that, and then stop thinking about it." Actually, both Christianity and Buddhism have helped me immensely with this. Thich Nhat Hanh and others have written beautiful, and easy-to-understand books about the Buddhist practice of observing your thoughts, and then letting them go, which agrees very well with the scientific evidence that overly-repeated thoughts causes habits and changes in the neurons in the brain. Similarly, in the Bible, I find this verse to be very helpful, especially while I am angry about environmental (and other) problems:

"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" – NRSV Ephesians 4:26

It is a verse which both validates the human emotion of anger, and also encourages us to act on that in a positive way *today*. If we let it gnaw on us for days, the neural connections start permanently setting up that emotion of anger (etc.). Do not

let the sun go down on your anger. Address it today! *You* have the power to change your brain for the better. Work out your *own* salvation!

I love you Pat Robertson. I love you, car companies which create pollution-machines. I am angry, and I think rightfully so, with some affects you cause, but I know you are providing a service that customers demand.

I cannot be angry with you.

I forgive you.

There.

It's that easy.

Now I won't think about those things 1,000 times for the rest of the day, and by the time I go to bed ("sun go down"), I will have decreased my cortisol levels by 1/1000 (an oversimplification, but with some truth in it)!

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.

I think it should be my new goal to make every chapter quote Hippies, Christians, Buddhists, the Bible, Scientists, and Shakespeare, and for there to be at least one hipster T-shirt idea per chapter as well.

Chapter 19; Importance # 38; BM

Getting a massage; thinking about scientific pros and cons of acupressure and acupuncture

Sometimes, no matter how many times I tell myself to stop getting infuriated by political posts by friends and relatives on Facebook or wherever, and try to do the Zen thing and let it go, shit just still pisses me off and it *does* get under my skin and I *can't* let it go and deep down, I realized I *don't even want to let it go*, and then I get aches, and even while I'm trying to be honest and self-assess each muscle, my ego (being more clever than me), tricks me like a raven and makes me ignore certain pains. In such cases, I've found it helpful to get a massage, not only to help provide warmth and movement to help relax the muscles and increase blood flow to remove inflammatory chemicals, but also to have an objective, second pair of eyes and hands to look me over and tell me where I've gone wrong and where I need help.

Haha ego! I can outsmart you after all! I can enlist the help of a different ego who *prides* itself on being able to find knots in muscles. If I can pit one ego against another, I might just have a chance of winning, and beating myself.

Do I sound crazy?

Yes.

But so will you when you really get to know yourself.

How can we not be crazy when we have evolved to have a selfish ego or even set of egos with various competing desires which furthermore compete with sometimes very vastly different altruistic or even more-selfish desires of culture?

You can train a lion to jump through a hula hoop, but eventually the wild beast eats the trainer. As another example of crazy, conflicted thoughts, half of me feels devastated for the trainer (my wife being an animal trainer of sorts), and the other half of me goes, "Yeah lion!" ... pretty messed up. But I know I'm not the only one. I've seen lots of Youtube videos of animals at zoos trying to attack cute kids through glass and half of the comments are essentially, "Go animal!" and the other half are, "How dare you say that!".

I can feel knots forming in my neck now as I consider how messed up my ego is and how ashamed I am. That, by the way, is an excellent skill I am glad I have developed, and which has helped me immensely with my headaches- the skill to be so aware of my body that I can notice when a thought causes my muscles to become tense.

Now that I have narrowed down the various ways my body responds to stress, especially neck pain, I try to essentially pretend to keep a third eye on my neck at all times. Then, while I'm walking throughout the day, if I see an event which bothers me, or a song, or comment or thought, I will notice immediately that my neck starts getting a little tight and that I am scrunching my shoulders up a bit, in a stiff position. Ideally, I try to get away from the situation, recognize that it is there, but then choose to focus on something else and let it go and do my best to do what I can to relax my shoulders and neck.

This skill can be viewed as a kind of Jedi-like training for one on the path to becoming enlightened. The Buddhists say that one sign of an enlightened person is frequent smiling and

laughing, partly because they see the true reality of how ridiculous everything is, including how ridiculous it would be to let a silly trivial thing upset him/her. So if I notice my shoulders getting tense, it means whatever comment, whatever situation that just happened angered my unenlightened (and still in-control) ego, and *that* is like a great teacher pointing out a deficiency that I need to work on. I think this is part of the wisdom behind the Tibetan Buddhists (including the Dalai Lama) who say that enemies make the best teachers, and we should receive them with gratitude, because they push us- they try to cause us suffering and harm. Suffering is only how we *react* to something, not the thing in and of itself.

I've noticed that people pay hundreds, or even thousands of dollars for spiritual retreats and motivational speakers, and so on, and I've found help with massage, talking within a community, reading books, and attending lectures, but the best thing which has helped me is what I just mentioned. Be your own teacher. Be honest with yourself. Build and notice self-feedback loops. If someone or something gets you highly nervous, angry, sad, etc., let that thing become your teacher! It's free! Be thankful that you have just noticed a part of yourself which still gets riled up over silly things (and *everything* really is silly), and then don't do what most people do, and use that anger to become bigoted or overly invested in some political, religious etc. clan of people to make yourself feel better, NO! Use it as a quick self-assessment, "Hmm interesting. This coworker is really different from me, or maybe *too similar* to me, and really tends to get on my nerves. My heart rate is elevated after our encounters. I feel they are truly unjust to me and maybe I can work things out professionally with a manager, but otherwise, I need to try to understand why they are the way they are so that I don't get upset at their actions. I need to respond in a 'no-feeling-manner' or a positive manner, such as pity, compassion, understanding, love, or humor. Thank you, coworker, for reminding me I am not enlightened yet, and have much to learn."

What does this have to do with massage, acupressure, and acupuncture? Massage has some scientific backing behind its beneficial effects; however, even though acupressure (especially by squeezing the skin very hard between your finger and thumb) and acupuncture are popular methods of relieving headache and migraine pain, science hasn't found an actual link, other than the placebo effect.

This is where the ego and the power of thoughts become important. Most MD's and scientists dismiss the placebo effect as an annoying variable that has to be accounted for, but see it as a ridiculous basis on which to build a treatment. Most alternative medicine doctors also get offended if you tell them that they are not helping because of Chi etc. as their thousands-of-years-old traditions claim, but that it is a placebo effect.

I think the problem here is tribalism and the clan-like desire of our brain to want to latch onto one idea or another that fits our bias and "group". For me, being both part of the "clan" of scientists, and also the "clan" of hippies and Buddhists and spiritualists, I find it easy and common sense to see *both* points of view. Humor me a minute.

By now, hopefully, whether you are religious, spiritual, or atheist and highly scientific in your world-view, you agree with me that 1) "Thoughts have power over the body". Extreme power! Cortisol-producing, headache-causing, ulcer-causing, shingle-causing power! My chemistry teacher got trapped in Vietnam war on a one-way street and was about to run into some Vietcong and thought he would die, and so he and his buddies *lifted up* the jeep, turned it around and sped off with mind-triggered adrenaline pumping through their veins. They have since tried to show off that feat to all their friends, but have been unable to trick their mind into releasing that much adrenaline ever again. The mind is powerful! The mind is also difficult to trick!

All of this is verifiable science, and has also been verified by hippies while smoking weed and dancing under the stars

during full moon festivals. We all agree. No problem. Groovy man. Cool shit. **Thoughts are super powerful and have effects on the body.** I really can't say it enough.

So from this hopefully, easily acceptable idea, #1, it follows quite logically that #2 is true: **the placebo effect is super powerful and can have effects on the body.** It should be logical then for **#3: Both Western medicine and Alternative medicine should seriously optimize the placebo effect, and use it as one method of healing.**

But no... instead of alternative doctors (and even flat-out shams) being proud of successfully using the placebo effect with good results, their clan and their ego gets in the way, and they get offended, and back into a silly corner which denies science and makes them look stupid and lose credibility. And no... instead of medical western researchers and doctors accepting the power of the mind and power of the placebo effect, and the possibility that some people other than themselves might have found excellent ways of managing stress, their clan and their egos get in the way, and they think, "what a bunch of anti-science losers- they should be prosecuted for malpractice!".

Why can't we all get along, man? Other than our alliances to our egos and clans, why do you accept the logic and obvious facts of #1 and #2, but get vehemently upset about #3? Have you not learned the trick that you should pause every time you get upset about something and realize you have an ego issue to deal with?

I'll conclude all this silliness with a true story about a time I went to a medical school recruiting fair, and, armed with an excellent MCAT score, was excited about the prospect of either going to a holistic/alternative medicine program, or a traditional M.D. or D.O. program.

I walk up to some tables with eager, positive, and friendly, smart representatives of prestigious medical schools

and ask them, “How many weeks in your 4-year program are devoted to learning about nutrition”

After a few blank stares and quick looks to the left and right, they say, either “I don’t know” with a look on their face like, “Why would you even ask that?” or they say, “There are about two weeks worth of learning involving nutrition”.

Great, I thought, so basically, even if I got an M.D. or D.O., my sister, a registered dietician will still know more about nutrition than me, and I will still have to defer to her about questions involving nutrition even though some cancer societies have said that up to half of all cancers could potentially be avoided or treated with an improvement in nutrition or environment...sweet. I’ll be able to help about half of my patients and the other half are screwed unless I refer them to a nutritionist which they may or may not follow up with.

“Next question”, I say. “How much training will I receive in stress reduction or capitalizing on the placebo effect as a way of helping patients, since many studies have shown that stress is an important factor in almost every disease?”

“Ummm, well, I don’t think I really understand your question, but we do train doctors in the importance of having a good bedside manner, which has been shown to help patients be more receptive to treatment and respond better to it as well. We involve you with lots of hands-on opportunities and are very proud of our low doctor-to-student ratios.”

Hmmm. A very valiant effort, but I’m assuming the answer to my question is essentially 0 days spent on the benefits of the placebo effect and stress-lowering therapies, which is even worse than the two weeks given to studying nutrition. OK! That’s it! Now to the holistic doctor schools!

“Hi how’s it going!”

“Great, how about yourself! Are you interested in holistic medicine?”

“Yes, in fact, I’ve just become fairly frustrated talking to representatives of medical schools which don’t teach much in the

way of nutrition or stress reduction, and I'm hoping you will understand where I'm coming from."

"Oh yes! To-o-o-tally! I feel you. They are totally clueless sometimes. We really treat the patient as a whole individual and offer a wide variety of treatments which considers the patient's whole mind, body, and soul!"

I sighed a sigh of relief, "Oh good! Exactly what I am looking for! Music to my ears. Now, can you tell me *how* your school teaches acupuncture? Because I have heard that research has shown that acupressure *does* provide a reported increase in overall well-being to the patient, and the American Headache Society even recommends it, but that the same amount of benefit is also reported in placebo-type trials where the practitioner puts needles into the body in completely random places."

"Oh well, yes, we teach it following the traditional Chinese methods which explain it in terms of chi and meridian lines of energy and chakras and so on. You will get the proper training here, which has its roots in a practice over 5000 years old!"

"...But... I just said... that all of that has been shown to be scientifically untrue, and that the locations don't matter at all. Don't get me wrong, I love all that you are doing, I just think you should be honest to your students that acupuncture is a placebo effect that is very effective and powerful."

The lady got red in the face. Her heart rate probably increased. Her sympathetic fight-or-flight nervous system was activated because I attacked her clan, "Well I don't know about *you* but *I* would rather trust 5000 *years* of wisdom and knowledge than just *one little study!*"

"Ok thank you very much. Here's your flier back."

Fucking idiots. Don't they realize that in science, the newer the information, the better, not vice versa? And all you need is one really convincing, scientifically rigorous study, sometimes. I don't need to pick up a rock and drop it for 5000

*years to know the basic effects of gravity. I can do that with one convincing study. Does their 5000-year-logic work just as well for evolution? What about for the heliocentric model? Do they believe the Earth is flat because that is a tradition that has been passed on for 5000 years religiously by idiots? Do they prefer alchemy to chemistry? Do they prefer blood-letting to band-aids? Seriously. What the fuck? I am seriously pissed off now. I don't know who I am more frustrated with. The highly-paid medical doctors who condescendingly laugh off any importance placed on nutrition and stress-reduction, or the low-paid, underground, cool, rebel, hipster-like Alternative doctors, who in some way, specialize in the placebo effect and stress-reduction methods, **but don't know it**, and are anti-science! I am too compassionate to work in a place where I can't provide nutritional and stress-reducing treatments to treat the whole patient, but I am too smart to buy into the anti-science Alternative medicine! Agghhhhh! Sometimes I hate being an iconoclast! I have **no** clan. I have destroyed them all by revealing all of their false gods! I feel like nobody understands me, or agrees with me, or loves me or is on my side! I don't fit in! There is no profession which fits me or woman who can love me since no person can know me. I am alone.*

Here's a hipster shirt idea: A man in a triangle hat, and long mustache down to the ground is putting needles in a patient on a bed, and the T-shirt reads, "Acupuncturist- the original Hipster, 5000 years before it was cool."...with a word bubble coming out of his mouth triumphantly, "I beat you all!"

Chapter 20: Importance #35; BMS

Yoga; No longer known as Naked

Yoga Man...should I get back into it?

My palms and fingers were flat, but relaxed, and pointing downwards. My arms were straight- one jutting to my right, and one to my left. Breathe in; legs are below the arms in a powerful triangle. Breathe out; right foot steps forward with the breath while visualizing the energy flowing from the breath out through the feet and palms. The movement causes my testicles to sway like they are flapping in the wind. I was doing naked yoga in a warrior pose, a favorite meditative practice of mine since age 13. It is because of yoga that my crooked back (scoliosis) no longer gave me pain.

Just then, my sister barges into my room.

“Agghhh! Oh no! Naked Yoga! Naked Yoga!”

She never forgot to knock on my door after that.

It also gave me the funny nickname of **Naked Yoga Man** within the Cross Country team in High School. She was one of the best varsity runners. I was one of the best junior varsity runners. Perhaps my parents read us that Bernstein Bear book about the little sister beating the older brother bear in sports too many

times or something because my little sister was always better than me at sports.

But at least I had a claim to fame as being that goofy and weird **Naked Yoga Man**.

Now, while living in a tent in the woods, a seemingly ideal location for yoga, I had actually gotten out of practice. I found it ironically **more** difficult to do yoga in my living conditions because I always got there in the dark and lived on a hill.

Hawai'i is a lush, beautiful place, formed recently (on a geological timescale) by volcanos. They are all mini-volcanos, mostly submerged by water in the middle of the Pacific, so open meadows on which to do yoga are rare unless you consider a beach a meadow. My four-small-man tent was the only place I could do yoga and it was always full of clumpy sleeping bags, clothes, water bottles, and moldy books and spiders and insects. The inside nylon roof constantly dripped wet with condensation. I only went in there to sleep. It was not a comfortable place.

Soccer-mom-yoga-moms with the Styrofoam pads and tights would be very displeased with my studio. Only ascetics and Spartans loved the conditions.

I visited a hippie Aunt of mine on Venice Beach, LA, the gathering place of misfits of society. She was an authentic original hippie- she ran away from home, joined a commune, took peyote and talked to animals and plants, served famous, cool 70's musicians beer, dated some Hell's Angels members, and could guess your astrological sign with a better than 10% success rate. She was my hero. So her opinion mattered to me.

She said I should get back into yoga and that it would help my headaches.

So, I started doing yoga again every day on the roof of the chemistry building at U. Hawaii. I especially enjoy the Sun Salute sequence since it helps me focus on breathing from position to position. I did yoga again and it didn't cure my

headache... but it did provide some stress relief and probably helped relax my shoulders and back.

It was probably yet another small, but important, 2% improvement- another nail in the coffin in the joyful death of my headache, my Bunion In The Brain.

Chapter 21: Importance #12: BMS

Punched in the face while chanting spiritual mantra while surfing

I not only dabbled in Hatha Yoga – breath Yoga – the only Yoga most Westerners know, (even though they don't usually even focus on the breath, but only the postures, asanas) but I also dabbled in what many Indians consider true Yoga, the sum practices within Hinduism, basically.

Especially since I was vegan/vegetarian, I enjoyed going to Hare Krishna temple with Sunny and other friends to dance, sing, eat delicious and purportedly prayed-over and holy vegetarian food, presad, and of course, chant:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare

Doing so, which is a meditative chant of the names of divine gods of Hinduism, is supposed to help one become enlightened and closer to God and be in a state of “God consciousness”.

I took that chant and altered it to fit my more-familiar Christian background with names that were therefore more meaningful to me. I would chant it while singing often as a prayer. I would do it while surfing too:

Jesus Christ Jesus Christ Christ Christ Jesus Jesus
Holy Spirit Holy Spirit Spirit Spirit Holy Holy
Father God Father God God God Father Father
Jesus Christ Jesus Christ Christ Christ Jesus Jesus
Holy Spirit Holy Spirit Spirit Spirit Holy Holy
I AM I AM AM AM I I
Jesus Christ Jesus Christ Christ Christ Jesus Jesus
Holy Spirit Holy Spirit Spirit Spirit Holy Holy
Love Love Love Love Love Love Love Love

I chanted it with a melody that came to me which lasted five lines long, but the main repetition of the Jesus – Holy Spirit – God section was only three lines long. The section above is nine lines long, including all of my favorite names of God: Father, I AM, and Love. It turns out that I had to repeat the 9-line segment four times before the melody repeated itself again with the Jesus – Father section on the downbeat.

I won't belabor with musical theory anecdotes, but I am happy to provide some samples of how it sounds on my webpage, etsagan.com.

Jesus Christ Jesus Christ Christ Christ Jesus Jesus

Yea! Here comes a wave- I'm in good position- go go go!
I'm accelerating! I must have caught it!

Yes! The board is suddenly stable and easy to stand on!
I caught it! I'm surfing! This is awesome! I can see the beautiful rocks and coral rushing past me below- sun sparkling through droplets of waves like shiny glass. Here comes the fall and hopefully it won't hurt...

Holy Spirit Holy Spirit Spirit Spirit Holy Holy

Back to deeper waters – swim strong. Here comes a wave – dive under it... just like problems in life- you can either swim straight into a 3’ wall of foam and water and let it push you back where you started, or dive under it and get kicked out onto the other side.

Father God Father God God God Father Father

Oh no! Here comes someone surfing straight at me! I know you’re supposed to duck and hide under your board, or dive, or swim away, but I’m not good at it and it seems too late! I’ll just try to catch the same wave, and then surf out of his way!

OK, here it is!

The wave is curling around me already...

Standing up...

Now let’s turn and get out of the way...

Too late!

Crash!

My old, \$20 foam longboard collided with the surfer and hit his head and then, after being submerged in water, it popped up and seemed to shoot out into the air about six feet while I tumbled like a pair of pants in a washing machine- my foot tugs up towards the air by the 9’ board it was attached to, burying my head into saltwater and sand.

As the dust literally settled, I found my board on the surface, and just as I sat on top of it, who do I see, but a Genghis Khan-looking, upset surfer swimming at me.

What is he doing?

Before I could realize what was going on, I noticed he had climbed onto my board and cocked his locked fist back. All I could hear is a Voice I attributed at the time to Jesus, saying,

“Turn the other cheek!”

So, having only heard God audibly clear like that one other time in my life, I obeyed and twisted my head.

Crack

The slug meant to crack my jaw, instead, ended up harmlessly hitting the back of my hard head and probably hurt his hand more than it hurt my skull. In fact, he swam away from the natural defense mechanism I didn't know I had and rubbed his hand and cursed in English and some mix of Hawaiian Pidgeon, Filipino, and Mongolian.

"You stole my wave!" yelled the angry Genghis Khan with a red face, long, thin black mustache, and short beard.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to steal your wave. I was just trying to get out of the way. I love you. Please forgive me!"

More cussing and mumbling and rubbing of hurt head and hand.

Quiet.

We had drifted away from the pack and away from any threats of large crashing walls of water, and bobbed peacefully up and down. The waves had a natural rhythm, as if they were joining me in the chant that had been become a constant background meditation of my mind for that day.

Love Love Love Love Love Love Love Love

Eventually, with each wave acting like an exhale, exhaling all tensions, Khan said in a local accent,

"It's ok brudda. You jus' get betta an practice on small kine waves. Den you can come ovah heeeah wen you mo' betta-shoots."

Woe! This chanting shit really works!

Chapter 22; Importance #48; S

Learned how to surf! Fun! ...and for me, spiritual

“It really puts the day in perspective”, said Rod, a surfer student friend of mine. He and others gave me tips and then I jumped in and tried it on my own.

1st day of surfing

I jumped into the ocean from whence I came once again, this time, the Pacific was closer to 70°F than 43°F and the cool, saltwater was refreshing on a hot day, and did not produce the shock or hyperventilating, fear-inducing feelings as I splashed in. The board wiggled left and right and I fell a few times from the smallest waves only five feet from shore. I’m sure I looked like an idiot, but I was on Waikiki, so I was in good company.

Balance is important. I hope my slack-line practicing while living in a van in Bellingham will help me, as people claimed.

I started paddling out to sea. Hmmm, this is awkward. I can’t swim with my arms in front, as I am used to. I have to paddle with this big scratchy thing in my way... Hmmm- it’s getting more stable while travelling, just like a bicycle!

Out 10 feet.
Crash! Tumble! Flipped! *Help!* Washing machine!
Where's the surface? I want to breathe!
Back 10 feet.
Out 10 feet.
Crash! Tumble! Flipped! Washing machine!
Back 10 feet.
Must... paddle... harder...
Out 12 feet.
Back 10 feet.
Out 12 feet.
Back 10 feet
Out 12 feet.
Back 10 feet.

Feeww! Finally made it to a clump of surfers! I will follow them and try to catch a wave! First, I'm going to sit on top of my board like they are. That looks easier...glad to have a break for my arms! No wonder some people surf as part of their triathlon training!

Then began an organic dance between 20 surfers and the ocean. The waves pushed us out and we adjusted and came in. The waves started crashing more to the left and we moved without missing a beat, almost anticipating it... almost simultaneously; as one.

The waves were the lead dancer and we swung our hips and tap danced around the mighty shoes that threatened to stomp us to death, or at any moment, leave us for a more worthy and suitable partner, leaving us stranded in the middle of a flat dance hall, alone, feeling silly and embarrassed and stupid.

"No waves ta catch heeah brah- gotta move ovah!"

The ebb and flow of the ocean, like dancing flames of a fire, is **mesmorizing** enough... but become **part** of it with 19 other bruddas and sistas... it's beyond words...

I always marveled at how birds fly like one organism. Sometimes, when I look at a school of fish evading a shark I half-

expect them to form into the shape of a massive hand, themselves turning into a more-mighty master, and grab the shark and squeeze it until all of its guts explode, providing fish-food for themselves... I have such a bashful sense of awe at creatures such as these... and then I found myself acting just like them and I didn't know how I was doing it!

Suddenly, I was snapped out of my reverie when I noticed that my location happened to be the best for the next wave... which was going to be here... in... 5 **seconds!** I look up at some of my surfer co-organism friends of mine and one just simply nodded slightly, which told me, "Go for it!"

I paddled **hard** –one- two- three- four- five- six strokes. Then I felt myself go backwards a bit and felt that eerie feeling, like someone looking at me (or showering with me with our eyes closed) – hair on end- somethings coming – somethings there- nerves alight from tailbone to neck. I looked back. *Oh yeah, there is someone behind me- just a 4 foot wall of water- that's all! Shit!*

I tried to stand up.

Too early.

I think I got one knee on the board- maybe two and then the momma wave slapped me silly. She said,

"No! That's not how to do it! Wait till your speed picks up and the board gets more stable, then it's easy to pop up on both feet, as if it is on stable land. Try again, sonny."

Tumble tumble tumble

When do I get to breathe?

2nd Day of surfing

"Why do you surf? What do you like about it?" I asked another surfing friend of mine, Warner.

"It really puts the day in perspective" he said, in his ridiculous Georgian-southern accent, now laced with Hawaiian Pidgeon.

“What? Getting beat up with waves puts the day in perspective? Like being glad to be on land?” I asked.

“No man, it’s like, well, yeauh, actually, gettin’ humbled ‘n all is always a good thang here and thar, but it’s more ‘bout a **feelin’** like bein’ a peace an relaxed an shit... I don’t know- it’s dakine- it cain’t **be** dess’cribd brah. It’s like nothin’ can bother me tha’ rest uh tha day. Maybe gettin’ yer ass kicked by tha waves helps a bit wi’ that- are you duckin under da waves, man?”

“No- how do you do that?” I asked, sounding, by comparison, like a prince of England.

“Oaawww man- you gotta do that, man! It’s like, as soon as ya see dakine wave comin’ yajuss push down on da nose as hard as you can and kick down and da wave clean misses ya- just passes ovah head”

So I tried that.

12 feet out.

Duck

6 feet back.

I didn’t do it perfectly the first time- let’s see if I can duck better...

12 feet out.

Duck!

3 feet back.

Nice!

I made it to the superorganism of surfers in 1/3 the time and with 3X the energy left.

After the dance, my queue once again, seemingly-magically came up and I swam hard- with a lot more energy and a better ability to focus and keep balance (due to not being completely exhausted after the swim)... I caught it! What a rush!

I felt like Jesus Christ himself walking on water... or... more like Peter- totally surprised that it actually worked!

I crashed in a gnarly ball of scraped flesh and coral and blood.

It was awesome.

“...puts the day in perspective, man”

When I would go back to Washington state, I'd try to explain to my fellow snowboarding friends unsuccessfully why I like surfing more than snowboarding.

“Wait a minute,” they said, “you mean with snowboarding you wait like 15 minutes on a chair lift and get 15 minutes of fun, and with surfing you have to wait 30 minutes for a wave, and then only get 2-60 seconds of fun?”

True. On paper, surfing solid water seems like a much better deal than surfing liquid water.

“No, but you are like, a flock of birds! Waiting for the wave is part of the fun! It's spiritual. You get a feel of the rhythms of the ocean. It makes you feel more connected to nature... and when you are actually standing up it's like 60 seconds of doing 360's off a jump- you are totally in the moment and all other time stops. It's just you and the wave. It's dakine. It really puts the day in perspective, brah!”

“What?! You become one with the ocean and turn into a bird?”

They all cracked up laughing at me, which is why we were friends. But while I was looking at my hipster, latte-drinking friends who were more successful than me- cashing in on the success of Washington wine, Boeing, Amazon, Starbucks, and Microsoft, and easily able to afford \$100 lift tickets and all the best gear, and enjoy the fast-pace fun of snowboarding, I realized that Hawai'i was changing me.

I talked slower. I enjoyed the rhythms of nature and simple pleasures. Everything wasn't a cost-benefit calculation. I didn't try to pack in a million things to do in a day. I just aimed to live in the moment- like surfing- standing on water, the only time when everything freezes- even time and moving water. The New York minute was spreading to the West Coast, but hadn't reached Hawai'i yet.

Wait! Even my headache freezes when I'm in **the flow** of surfing! That's it! That's why everyone says it puts the day in perspective. Those 30-or-so seconds of frozen time aren't very long, but they leave an indelible mark on the soul, and in some ways are eternal! It's like getting a glimpse of heaven to start your day and you hold onto that heaven the rest of the day.

This could be one of the secrets to curing my headache!
It's not just a sport... it's almost like... a religion!

I closed my eyes.

I saw and heard waves rushing gently towards me-
erasing my worries.

White-capped waves rolling in towards me in a line.

Waves rolling out.

After a morning "dawn patrol" of surfing, I could often close my eyes throughout the day and feel and hear and see the ocean, still there, with me.

It puts the day in perspective.

Chapter 23; Importance #13; S

Sought Spiritual Support Group;

Intersivity

I came early to the classroom which held the Intersivity Christian club on campus with an important question,

“Do you encourage your members to be liberal or conservative in their political beliefs?” my eyes burned with intensity and a little pain behind them, which often unsettles people until I flash a large, wide smile, which is why I usually try to smile often, to not scare people.

“Oh- what... you mean? No, we don’t tell people who to vote for. We encourage all students to make their own decisions.”

I sighed, “Oh good, because I just quit a Christian Evangelical group on this campus because they said anyone who votes for a pro-abortion candidate isn’t a true Christian. I didn’t like that the youth pastor was using his position of influence to encourage impressionable, young, Christians to instead, do the apparently “Christian” thing, and vote for Bush, who invaded a country and has killed thousands of civilians, with more each day, as if Muslim adults and children are somehow worth less than a fetus in the womb of a woman in a mostly-Christian country.”

“Really? They said you aren’t a true Christian if you vote Democrat, basically?”

“Yeah”

“That’s not right.”

Oh good, then I can check this group out.

“Yeah, I’m looking for a campus Christian fellowship. I was in an Evangelical Christian campus group at my last school and really liked it and grew as a Christian and am looking for something similar. I like the high energy and excitement and praying and spirituality of evangelical groups, but not the fundamentalism. I like to be open-minded too.”

“Oh, well, Praise Jesus! I think God has sent you to the right place, brother! We are so happy to meet you! We are definitely evangelical with a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit, but also, since we are in Hawai’i, we incorporate Hawaiian traditions and ideas so we are pretty open-minded and multicultural as long as it doesn’t violate the Word of God!” the pastor said. “You’ll have to meet Ikaika and Kulani- they are co-leaders and are Hawaiian! They love talking about the mana of the land and blending Christianity with Hawaiian culture! We even call our local Intervarsity branch ‘Ka Wai Ola’ which is Hawaiian for ‘The Living Water’”

This place sounds awesome!

The service started, much like what I was used to. There was high energy and cheesy worship songs, basically the opposite of my **preferred** listening preference of Seattle grunge, alternative, but opposites attract and the music somehow moves me and gets me in a happy, open, receptive (carefully designed, I’m sure) emotional state, which I enjoyed compared to the more traditional United Methodist services I was raised with.

There was a happy, white (haole) singer who sounded like Third Day, who lead the worship team and prayed between each song.

“God, we thank you for bringing us to this place and just moving your Spirit through each and every one of us”...etc.

But what really blew my mind was a happy, chubby, tall Hawaiian Polynesian ukulele singer who sang and talked like Brother Iz, the most famous modern Hawaiian musician, whose “Somewhere over the rainbow” rendition was popular on the Mainland at the time. This little Brother Iz student prayed in such a sweet and gentle, loving, and simple manner, like a plumeria flower itself.

This place ain't the mainland! I love it!

Then, sure enough, as advertised, the ‘sermon’ involved Bible verses, but also taught us Hawaiian words and wisdom from the ages, passed down by the respected elders, Kapuna.

“Lau lima means many hands in Hawaiian. We use it a lot even today because working together has always been important in Hawaiian culture. Ma ka hana ka 'ike means to learn by doing. It is the main way that Hawaiians like to teach their keiki, their children. It is a pretty different mindset from many of the college classes, even on this campus, which is more lecture-based.”

We sang some more songs, with emotional highs crescendoing, and climaxing with people raising hands, shouting in tongues, and praying for each other in corners. We gathered and prayed together extensively and individually and talked to each other about struggles in our lives and any needed prayer.

I walked up to some prayer leaders, as instructed for “those who need prayer”. *I feel comfortable enough with these new friends who care about me to admit that I live with a horrible headache...a cross I usually bear alone.*

They laid hands on my head and the warmth was amazing and seemed to flow through my body.

“Lord, thank you for bringing our brother Elon here to worship with us today. Lord, he is burdened with a horrible headache. We know that is not from you, but of the Devil. We cast out this evil in the name of Jesus Christ! Yes, Iesu! We bind the dark spirits which have inhabited his head in the name of Jesus! We bind it to hell! We also know that you send challenges to your servants to make us stronger, but that you never send a

challenge too great, for we can do anything in the name of Jesus. You have said that where two or more are gathered, there I also am, so we gather here now with the power of the name of Jesus to cast off all pain in our brother's head and bring him the loving balm and healing power of your Spirit so that Your Glory may be revealed, so that we may praise your name even more. Amen!"

I feel better!

My scientist friends would say, "Yes, the placebo effect is a powerful thing", but they would also have to admit that religious people are, in general, happier than non-religious people. For instance, the Amish have 1/5 as many depressed people as the average American. Was it a placebo effect? Was it because of the strong community, which we, as social animals evolved to crave and require, and which we often lack in our fractured, modern individualistic culture, distracted by technology? Was it something spiritual?

I don't know.

I knew three things: 1) life was not worth living with such a horrible headache, 2) I was willing to try anything, and 3) I liked these Hawaiian, evangelical Christians with or without their nutty speaking of tongues!

Besides, unless I'm a hypocrite, I certainly am not one to judge someone for acting weird and crazy!

Chapter 24; Importance #14; S

Sought Spiritual Support Group;

Church of the Crossroads

I walked down University Avenue from the U. Hawai'i down towards Waikiki and was startled to randomly see people in their 40's and above holding signs which read,

"Make Peace!"

"No war in Iraq"

"WWJD?"

It reminded me of when I dressed up in a make-shift hazmat outfit and held signs which read, "Who would Jesus Bomb?". I liked them.

"Hey, what's going on man? Is this a protest or something?" I asked.

"We are with the church across the street, Church of the Crossroads, and we come out here every Friday to support peace, basically. It's not really an official thing. It's just us, expressing a value of peace to let the world know that not all Christians support George Bush's wars."

"Wow! That's awesome! I've been looking for a Christian group like that, but at Western Washington University, the evangelical group I was with, held a "fireside chat" at the pastors

house to describe how the War in Iraq can be thought of God's Sword of Justice, which he occasionally uses through leaders to bring justice, and that didn't sit well with me. Also, I was just told here at a group at UH that I can't be a true Christian if I vote for someone who isn't staunchly anti-abortion."

"Oh wow!" the protesters said with very hearty and loud laughs, "You definitely won't have that problem at Church of the Crossroads. It is a UCC church, a United Church of Christ church with both the 'Peace and Justice' designation, and 'Open and Affirming' designation, which means we, publicly, as a church like to tell people that we are pro-peace, and pro-accepting of LGBT, unlike most churches in America."

Wow! That's soooo fucking awesome!

"Haha! Sword of Justice and anti-abortion, that's so classic it's funny!"

Hmmm. Interesting. Instead of letting contrasting opinions get them mad and sad, like it does for me, it makes them laugh. I can learn from these people.

So in two days, I checked out the church and brought Sunny with me. She accompanied me to many different types of temples and churches.

The service began with a ringing of a Buddhist bowl and the hand-out bulletin explained that this was a period of silence and meditative reflection. It sounded ominous.

We went through a service which was actually very similar to the United Methodist traditional service: A choir sang a call to worship, we sang traditional hymns, had communion, and announcements, a sermon, more singing, and that's about it. Pretty standard. However, there were three radical differences:

- 1) Many of the hymns were written by Brian Wren, which seemed to capture many of the radical feelings that the life of Jesus brought to me, and infused old ideas, with social justice. The music was

old-fashioned and upheld traditions, but the words were subversive.

- 2) The sermon was *very* radical and subversive. One wouldn't have been prepared to experience that by looking at a grandfatherly, wise old man in church clothes walk up to the pulpit, but the words were a constant call to action for the church and all her members to wake up and heed the true call of Jesus to love the poor and the planet without excuses, and without falling into traps of comfort from culture's excessive consumerism. It was a good fit for someone living in a tent.
- 3) There was a period of time called "passing of the peace" where people greeted each other with hugs and said things like, "Peace of God be with you", which in itself, was not very unusual for a church, but the feeling that one got from it was very powerful. "I sense a lot of healing energy in this place. It is very loving... and healing... good healing energy" said Sunny, visibly taken aback.

After church, we met with members while eating snacks, "pupus" in Hawaiian.

"I really enjoyed the service today" I told an old, Asian member. "I came here because of the pro-peace signs being held outside on Friday."

"Oh yes! We have a long tradition of being very radically pro-peace. A lot of members have left because of it actually. During the Vietnam war, we would live up to this building's name as a 'sanctuary' and keep AWOL and Conscientious Objectors here and stop them from being taken by the police or military. See that woman over there?"

I looked at a lady who looked like a pretty average church lady, except for a fierce rebellious impish glare and mischievous smile, "Yeah?"

“The military sent troops to physically extract dissenters from the building with guns and uniforms and she stood right in front of that door there and said, ‘You are **not** getting through this door. You will have to shoot me before you break down this door’ and she just stood there for a few minutes staring down these big, confused military guys. I guess they eventually realized that destroying church property and hurting church members wouldn’t look good in the news so they backed off grudgingly, but they kept coming back, looking for a way to take the Conscientious Objectors. It was a divisive time, here, like it was throughout the whole country.”

“Woe. That’s awesome. I’ve never heard of a church doing things like that. Well, sometimes I hear of Catholic churches in Latin America giving refuge to people, or stories in books from long ago, but nothing in **modern America!**”

We also chatted with small-talk, called “talk story” in Hawaiian Pidgeon.

“Where do you live?”

“In a tent. Actually, I have been looking for a place which I can use as a physical address for driver’s license-reasons and various official reasons. Would this church be open to that?”

“Oh yes, definitely. Our passion for social justice gives us a passion for helping the homeless. We even used to let lots of people sleep here, but then after one person punched someone for sleeping on ‘their’ bench, we stopped doing it because it was getting out of control. So instead, we work with a program called Family Promise which provides a place for people to sleep and various services, like looking for work, on a rotating basis from church to church.”

“Oh wow- cool! I’d love to help out with that!”

And so began my inclusion into the Church of the Crossroads community. What it lacked in youthful, high energy praying and songs it made up with acceptance, contemplation,

and a deep passion for peace, justice, and environmentalism in a very intellectual manner.

The name Crossroads was apt for me at that time. I was at a crossroads of my own life, going from a fundamentalist evangelical group, whose values made me feel like an outsider, and gave me great consternation to a new set of friends and community. The Ka Wai Ola intervarsity group fulfilled my need for energy and spirit, and the Crossroads community filled my intellectual need.

With this Crossroads group, I feel like, for the first time, I can call myself a Christian without feeling like I have to apologize for belonging to a group of assholes who think they can go to war in the name of God, flaunt their wealth in the name of God, and destroy the environment in the name of God. They are quite the opposite, actually. Finally, a group of friends who understand me!

The Bunion in the Brain, with less deep-seated worry and guilt squeezing it from all sides, lessened just a little bit, the worry instead being spread throughout another large superorganism... another 2% improvement.

A bird's oil-drenched head and beak suddenly cocks to the right with interest. Will its memory get stronger and more painful with this group which also shines a light of consciousness and awareness on it, or will it get weaker?... or will it first get stronger and more painful and no longer ignored so that it can finally go away?

Chapter 25; Importance #18; 8

Hawaiian Spiritual Genius friend tells

me "Think more with your Heart"

One time, during a pretty heavy prayer session after Ka Wai Ola, Ikaika, one of the Hawaiian leaders came up to me and prayed over my headache.

He was tall, with curly black, poofy hair. He said he grew up in Hawai'i and went to MIT just to prove his local school councilor wrong, who said he would never get into a place like MIT. He had to be a genius to rise above the small-island ignorant mentality that a lot of locals had, whether it be due to the public schools, or mix of traditions and culture, or due to its very strongly-felt isolation from the rest of the world... it is difficult to succeed in school and get into prestigious schools on the Mainland, but he did it.

He and I enjoyed talking about logic and he was a very contemplative Catholic. When most people think "Catholic" they often think "Pope" and "anti-contraceptives" and other hot-button issues, including old-fashioned corruption from the Holy Roman Empire, including its fight with paganism, science, and heretics.

However, the Catholic church today is one of the most pro-science religious entities. It took a few hundred years to apologize, but they do seem to accept the authority of science, at least as a branch studying God's creation.

Catholics also can take pride in a long line of contemplative people, such as the Desert Fathers over a thousand years ago, and modern contemplatives, like Thomas Merton and Father Keating, who have more in common with modern Buddhists like Thich Naht Hanh and the Dalai Lama, than Protestant Evangelical Christians.

I have actually seen Evangelicals ask some contemplative Catholics "Are you saved? When did you accept Jesus? What date?" to which they often just look back and stare at them in a confused manner,

"I'm not sure to what you are referencing, my friend. I am on a daily path to **work out my own salvation** with Jesus. I do not feel like I am quite saved yet. I have a long way to go. Jesus has always been in my heart, as he has been in everyone's heart, quietly waiting for us to come to him during quiet times of stillness."

Now it is the Evangelical's turn to look confused, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, but are you **saved** yet? Do you want to accept Jesus into your heart now by praying with me so that you can become a true follower right now?"

And so it was that this contemplative, perceptive, genius Hawaiian Catholic who was also a leader in a Hawaiian Evangelical Intervarsity college group came up to me, after getting to know me well, and said something which changed my life,

"I sense that you are thinking too much with your brain. Think more with your heart."

"What? How do I think with the heart? The heart pumps blood. The brain does the thinking."

“True. But at the interface of mind and body, there is soul... and emotions. I struggle with this also. That is why I know you struggle with it. It is easy for us to be logical. It is easy for us to analyze data and deduce and think and act rationally. At times, this is very important, and it would be helpful if more people lived like this. But at other times we need to be silent and listen. We need to quiet our mind, quiet our logic, quiet our intellect and listen to our still, small voice which is our conscience, which is Jesus, which is the Holy Spirit, which is also called ‘heart’.

Sometimes we need to make decisions based on logic. Other times, we need to make decisions based on our conscience, based on heart.

It isn’t just about decisions. It is also about a general state of being, or attitude. A brain-only person is like Spock in Star Trek, or a robot- no emotion. A person who lives from the heart lives in a state of joy because of the joy of life, and is described as an ‘open’ person who ‘wears their heart on their sleeve’- it is a person who laughs easily, cries easily, and maybe even sometimes gets frustrated or angry easily. It is better to allow your heart to express itself in this way, than to repress it.

Think more with your heart.

Do you see now what that means?

It means to let yourself be who you are and not hold back.”

“Yeah, I think... I mean I **feel** like I know what you are saying... I recently have been realizing that when I am surfing I try to plan ahead and say with my brain things like, ‘Ok Elon, move the board to the right, wups! Too much! Now move it to the left’ and I can just get caught in a loop where I am trying to force the board one way or another and constantly make compensations logically. But I am learning to **just let go** and allow the waves to dictate where the board has to go, and instead of trying to figure it out like a math problem, I have to get in a state of **reacting** to the wave with instincts in real-time. I have to **listen** to the wave... yes, I guess listen with the heart is the best way of putting it... it

is like... I have to listen with **something**... but it is not the brain- that just gets things confused and overly-controlled... so I guess you are right... I have to listen more with my heart."

"Exactly. Instead of living in a state of logic and in a state of the brain, where you only call on emotions or the heart for help later, as an afterthought, do the opposite. Live in a state of heart, reacting to your surroundings, and then call on the help of the brain, like you call on a friend for help with a particular problem that you need its advice with... give the Heart the main controls, not the Brain."

"Thanks! Yes that is starting to make more sense now!"

"Another way of understanding it... have you ever looked into a dogs eyes and seen some kind of intelligence and essence of being there?"

"Yes, definitely"

"We would do well to learn from animals. Many of them, like dogs, are very intelligent, and have a kind of consciousness, but yet you don't see them fretting over the past, or worrying about the future, do you?"

"Of course not, no."

"The intellect of humans got so large, that our egos, the stories we tell ourselves, our 'brain' as I've been saying, takes over. What we have to do (through periods of contemplation, for instance), is to learn to quiet the nonstop stories and repeated tapes talking to us- the brain- and let us, as an animal exist again, like a wonderful, intelligent dog, completely in the moment. Our great intellect should be used as a tool, instead of mistaken for who we are. We are **not** our tool. We are spirit"

He paused,

"We are Spirit...

contained in a body...

with a powerful tool of intellect...

Think with your heart...

That is who you really are...

You are not just a tool that can do cool tricks!"

*I am not the tool. I am that which moves the tool. "I think therefore I am" means that I am not the "thoughts"; I am the **mover behind the thoughts**, or as Ken Wilbur says, I am "The Witness". I need to "think" with my heart, which means I need to be aware of who I really am, **the mover behind thoughts**, the Witness!*

A conversation rarely changes a life, but this is one example of such an event, and I am eternally grateful for it. Thank you, Ikaika! Again, the scientist in me has no idea what all this means, but only that I cannot deny that it has helped me in some difficult-to-measure manner. Just because "peace of mind" cannot be put on a ruler doesn't mean it is an illusion... or if it is an illusion, it doesn't mean that it is a worthless illusion to pursue!

Chapter 26; Importance #36; 8

Hippy drum circle and Open Mics

Illusion. That word bugs me. So does this song,
“Row, row, row your boat,
gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
life is but a dream.”

Luckily, ever since the philosophical implications of this song have been hashed out by an old Star Trek movie, I feel a lot better about it.

No, but seriously, it bugs me to think of all of life as nothing but a dream. It seems so much more **real** to me than that. Unfortunately, I think most Buddhists and Hindus would agree with the author of that song, for they spend a great deal of focus and energy to discover the illusions of this world, and in fact, one of their main goals is to find true reality. Many of them think that **everything in this world** is an illusion, and so in that way, most of our lives **are** just a dream of our own design by our own ego. By the way, I say “unfortunately” above, not because I disagree with them, but because I agree with them and I wish I didn’t! Throughout my Path of Healing, I not only altered/grew

my Christian faith, but started to genuinely appreciate and practice Hindu and Buddhist faiths.

What is a scientist to do? The most-respected position for a scientist is Atheism, because a good scientist only believes something after there is sufficient evidence. However, doing so, I have found, leads to “thinking with the head” instead of “thinking with the heart”. As the last chapter mentioned, my priority now in my life is self-preservation... I must do everything possible to heal my headache, or risk slipping into a deeper depression that only a shotgun or cold ocean could remedy.

Does that mean I must accept illusions of various faiths blindly?

No.

I think (and feel!) I can search for spiritual and psychological healing with a trial-and-error method similar to the scientific method.

The following is a description of another set of experiments.

While walking around campus late at 11 pm at night, I heard some music emanating from an enclave- a protected region of campus with a roof and outlets.

Cool! A band! I love live music!

I walked closer.

This isn't a band, this is a mini-Woodstock, a mini-Burning Man... a drum circle! Cool!

Following Ikaika's advice, I didn't just sit on the outside coolly and calmly, giving a civilized golf clap every once in a while, saying, “Cherio, mate. Well done little didy.”

No. I jumped in and started dancing with the crazy hippy-types. I had found another superorganism!

Like other superorganism events I had been experimenting with, there are no hard and fast rules that any one person can delineate for you... there's just... movement!... and give a meme of motion here!... and repeat a meme of motion

here!... react!... get out of the way!... get **in** the way!... There's a pretty girl my age here!... There's a cool guitar riff here!... move that way!... move this way!... There's an inspiring singer here!... There's a guy offering me to play a drum here!... Go!...

It was actually the perfect laboratory to practice Ikaika's advice! It was all instinctual! Ironically, such a place was even easier to practice "listening to the heart" than the structured, and cerebral "talking at" experience and organization that I had experienced at all churches or temples I had ever been to!

There was so much free-spirited instinctual articulation of ourselves, I am surprised I didn't see any couples having intercourse in public, like I have heard would happen during the "if it feels good, do it" hippie movement, where such drum circles have their modern roots.

By the way, it is not only an American underground movement which continues to stay alive throughout cities, these "drum circles" ... but I have heard they are popular in many cities throughout Europe and Latin America! It is not something which was invented by hippies in the 1960's... it is something anthropologists have seen for ages in many indigenous cultures, often involving bon fires and shamans.

African and Native American pow wows are well known, but Asian indigenous cultures also had Shamans who would also take various naturally-derived drugs and cut themselves and get into some kind of "trance", a purposeful "illusion". It is easy to judge such indigenous shamans as misleading quacks, but what **really** is worse: living in a state of illusion without knowing it (driving to work, working throughout the day mindlessly, only to come home and watch TV), or **purposely** inducing a state of illusion and altered awareness? What's worse: **conforming** to societal norms of ignorance and a desire to be distracted by entertainment, or altered **awareness**?

Believe it or not, while completely drug-free, I remember dancing next to someone in the back-right corner, and being passed a wooden flute. I have no background experience playing

the flute, except for some basic practice with plastic recorders in elementary school...and yet... it spoke to me. Some essence called out to me.

I did not set out with my brain to perform it, saying, "I will now access past files of mine to remember fingerings and key signatures and notes and will play a melody within the same key as the guitarist" ...no... that's thinking with the brain in the lead.

Instead, I just listened intently to the music...**really** listened to the music and continued to let it move my body in ways which probably would look stupid, but since that was the way of the superorganism, such was what I felt moved to do.

I let the music **become** me. Anyone who has ever been obsessed with a song knows what I mean... and yet... it was different. I wasn't some cool chick with puffy hair rollerblading while listening to my favorite Madonna song in the 80's. I didn't have neon pink spandex and white hair bands, chewing bubble gum and dancing to the beat. The song was not really a song at all... nothing I have heard of and never will again... it only existed in that moment, which was part of its power... the power of Now.

I couldn't predict where the chords or melody would go, because I had never heard it before. Nobody had. It forced us to just **react** to each other, with short feedback loops. Feedback loops, by the way, are the main scientific way of describing how flocks of birds and fish and other superorganisms act in such a concerted manner. The termite by himself will randomly pick up a chunk of dirt, but when put nearby other termites, they respond to instincts which tell them "If someone places a piece of dirt over here, now pick up some dirt and put it next to it" and the give and take quick feedback loops build beautiful cathedrals of dirt, like computer fractals which produce beautiful designs following a simple, intricately repeating pattern to build complexity from simplicity.

Emergence and spontaneous order is an interesting thing... especially when you become a participant in it.

I found myself doodling with this wooden flute, and before I knew it, a piece of me, not my brain, but heart, being tugged with the strings of music had some kind of creative ideas, like “with these current chords and rhythms, a certain kind of melody would be very beautiful right here”. And then, without warning or “forced manipulation”, I, to my surprise, heard that exact melody that some part of me desired coming out of my flute. I literally thought at first, “Who did that? Who is playing that beautiful melody! I was just desiring that melody, and yet here it is? Who read my mind?”

I did. The body. The **true** self desired something beautiful, a part to play in the superorganism of musicians, and then, the body subconsciously acted in such a way to make it happen.

It was as if I was experiencing an out-of-body experience in the sense that I had no control or knowledge of my body or what it was doing, and yet I could see it occurring. It was like I was looking at my body from the point of view of the superorganism, not the individual. The individual is the separate self that our illusionary egos desperately try to convince us exists... “we are separate!”, but **losing** myself to the music actually let me **find** myself...my true self... as a superorganism... or at least it showed me that there really was some part of me which existed as a “decision-maker” outside of what I thought was “me”.

The true me enjoys dancing, beauty, music, art, harmony, love, laughter, joy, feelings, reacting to surroundings, feeling “part” of some kind of community and desires these wonderful things to flow around me and can instruct my body to make it happen.

The false me worries. The false me over-plans. The false me over-controls my body to produce some kind of result in the future.

The true me responds to beauty around me and desires a contribution and watches with joy as that contribution takes shape, without judgement or over-manipulation.

I just sat there for maybe five to ten minutes, bringing beautiful music into the world, combining with spontaneous, and un-planned music of others. I surprised myself with how beautiful I could make the flute sound. In fact, it was probably this surprise that “separate –I” made/felt which brought me back to my usual, default, and illusionary, ego-driven “I vs them” state of mind that usually defines my existence, as it does for most people.

I grieved the feeling/state as it left me, and separate “I” wanted the feeling to come back, which pulled me **more** back to ground, back to what most people call “reality”, but what I see truly is “just a dream” now.

I looked at the strange, foreign-looking flute that I had just been “one” with. Another song came and I overthought it, thinking, *Hmmm I can see the main guitarist playing a C-chord with his hands, so I will try to find a C on this flute*, and then after a few clumsy, squeaking notes which all came a measure too late... I realized I was back to being controlled by my ego, the brain, the mind, whatever one wants to call it.

Just as I found it curious that many surfers say that surfing “puts the day in perspective”, I also found it curious that many of my friends who do hallucinogenic drugs say that every time they come down from a trip they get freaked out because, “man- reality is the weirdest, craziest experience, not the trip!”

Now the “life is but a dream” line isn’t what bothers me, for, after experiencing a kind of “ego-less” state while surfing and while experiencing a “group-type” mentality while playing music, I can see how life, as most people know it, really is a dream of our own design. What bothers me now is the repeated phrase “merrily”. We modern Americans are **not** happy with the dream,

the Starbucks, the Walmarts, the Google, the Netflix that we have dreamt... True merriment comes from letting go of all that and experiencing a truer sense of reality outside of one's isolated little illusionary self...

If the rat-race is the illusionary reality that we have dreamt up for ourselves, why aren't we happier? If we insist on escaping the bliss that an intelligent Labrador dog exudes, with no sense of self or regret or guilt or insecurity as it joyfully jumps and catches a Frisbee, possibly feeling like it is part of the Frisbee, and not separate from it, as I felt with the flute..., if we insist on escaping that "reality" in favor of our own ego-made dream, why do we dream such nightmarish, depressing dreams? Why have we dreamt up racism, sexism, ruthless capitalism, wars, religion, material accumulation, environmental destruction, gossip... EVERYTHING?

If we are going to dream, why not dream up a happy future? If our dreaming is doomed to failure, then why not **wake up** and experience the ego-terrifying, but freeing existence without self? Actually, self still exists, but not separate from everything, but with a truer appreciation for its role and connection with all other things... and why is it so hard for me to repeat this experiment?

Chapter 27; Importance #37; S

Full Moon Gatherings

After 40 minutes of walking in the full-moon-lit jungle path I began to wonder if I had misunderstood the vague directions and would never find the Full Moon Gathering.

But then I smelled marijuana. *I must be getting close. I can't hear them, but I can smell them.*

As I climbed up some rocks, slipping occasionally in mud, I eventually heard them:

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka

It got louder with each step

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!

What a scene! On top of a large slab of rock stood a guy with large dreads pounding a 3' marching-band-style bass drum, dreads flying every which way with each beat. There were lots of people in thrift-store clothes and dirty hair beating on drums, some in a trance, some lazily, some with great passion and intensity- some slow- some fast. Some of the *thuds* had some cohesive beat, and some were out-of-place, yet it still worked.

There was a skinny, but ripped guy playing guitar without a shirt- mostly reggae-style on the up-beats.

There was a white guy rapping with a ukulele. That guy was awesome. He was my hero.

There were people dancing in gyrating, yet smooth movements in bikinis and also some in flowing scarfs.

There was a haze surrounding everyone from all the marijuana.

There was a bon-fire.

There were even some frat-boy-looking college partyers who brought a cooler filled with beer and ice.

Of course, then there was the moon. The all-pervading, large full moon which made all the large, once-green jungle leaves shine silver. The moonlight shone moonbeams through the smoke like sunbeams piercing through clouds or through the ocean.

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!

What a wild scene! It was like the on-campus Open-mics, but elevated.

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!

Once again, I found myself beside myself. I slowly saw myself reach for a large djembe-style drum and started doing a simple beat.

boom—boom—boom—boom

boom—boom—boom—boom

I was slowly letting myself slip away into the crowd, into the superorganism without judgement without side-comments from my head... just slowly letting go. The ambience and moonlight definitely helped.

Once again, a deeper part of myself wished that there was a little bit more of a tik-a-tacka on the upbeat, and I was happy to hear someone starting to do that.

I looked down.

It's me!

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!

tik-a-tacka

Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!

tik-a-tacka
Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!
tik-a-tacka
Bump---ka-dicka-dicka!
tik-a-tacka

I swayed left and right in a figure-eight fashion and let my ego go and become one with the music. Sometimes, I picked up a didgeridoo that I brought. Sometimes I played a guitar that someone passed to me. But mostly, I liked the drums. It was all about the beat.

We all started holding our hands in a circle and the music slowly faded. The guy with the dreads said, "We come here to give thanks to the Moon and all life! Ommmmmm"

Everyone responded, "OMMMMMMMMM"

Then the beat came back, twice as fast and with twice the energy and fervor.

After enjoying the experience for untold hours, I would occasionally wander and meet people.

"Hi, I'm Francine"

"I'm Elon. Nice to meet you. I think I've seen you at a few Open Mics."

"Yeah! I think so too! Eeek!"

Suddenly, she took off her pants and revealed tight panties and bright white, thin, athletic legs which glowed in the moonlight, like someone had lit a lantern.

"There's a centipede in my pants! Ah!"

"Oh! Are you ok?" I asked, suddenly concerned for her, and also impressed with her legs. I moved the pants inside-out and felt for bugs.

"I think its ok now," I said, "you can probably put your pants on"

"I... don't want to. I'm too scared to."

"Oh..." I looked around and saw lots of people looking at her, especially the frat-boys, "I guess.. you should get going. I can help you down the mountain."

“Oh. Ok. Thanks. Good idea- let’s go!”

That’s how I met Francine. She was one of the many nice-looking hippy girls who I was happy to meet.

Chapter 28; Importance #27; S

Crazy Persian Homeless genius guy

tells me, "I am sick until you are healed"

Being homeless, I met lots of interesting homeless people. Many of them were certifiably crazy and in and out of mental institutions, but I never really judged them harshly for that. They didn't seem really crazy to me, just interesting. I enjoy talking to crazy people more than normal people.

One such person was Saeed, who claimed to be a Persian Prince.

"I have to wear these glasses because they protect you. Without them, my stare is so intense that it can burn a hole in your head. Hey, could I borrow your computer some time? I want to put magic crystals in it which will elevate and atune it to a fifth dimension."

"Ahhh, no thanks" I said, "I actually need it to be trapped in the baser three dimensions, plus time, since I am a scientist and scientists study the normal, boring physical reality."

"Oh, ok. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That makes sense. Good idea. Maybe some other time."

“Hey, since you have access to the chemistry building, could you make some nano-gold magic particles for us some time to drink? I have a secret recipe for it. It combines with your DNA, elevating it, taking you to another dimension so that you are ready for the 2012 next jump in consciousness, as foretold by the Mayans.”

“Hmmm. No... sorry”

“Oh common man!”

“No, right now, I just have to focus on getting rid of my crazy headache I’ve had for years.”

“Oh! I can help with that! I know how to fix that! Look at my eyes”

“Ok...”

“Now listen to me carefully. I am going to tell you a great truth which comes from the fact that we are all one, all connected.”

“Ok..” I said, staring into his beautiful, large, brown Persian eyes, with large eyelashes.

“Are you listening carefully?”

“Yes”

“Ok here it is...”

“Ok...”

“I am sick until you are healed”

Pause

“What?”

“I am sick until you are healed” he repeated, dead serious.

“That doesn’t make sense. I am the one with the headache, not you”

“Well, now I am sick too. You better heal yourself fast, because I am sick until you are healed. I’m depending on you.”

Ok. I’ve had enough of his craziness. I’m going to go now... yet... something about that nonsensical phrase seems helpful and I don’t understand why...

I am sick until you are healed...

Chapter 29; Importance #17; BMS

Breathe

Saeed could tell I wanted to go.

“Wait!” he commanded. “One more thing before you go.”

“What.” I stated, getting annoyed. I often talked to crazy people throughout the night, which hurt my sleep schedule, which didn’t help my headache.

“You need to breathe more to heal your headache.”

“What?”

“You are breathing too shallow. Instead, breathe like this.”

He put his arms out in front of his belly like a ballerina and breathed a really deep breath through his nose loudly, and it puffed up his belly, and then chest to over two times its volume. Then he let it out in a large, loud sigh, “Ahhhhhhh!”

I copied him.

“No. Deeper. Try again.”

I copied him better.

“Good! Now breathe like that all the time and keep your focus on breathing deeply all the time and your headache will go away. The brain needs oxygen, so if you focus on giving it plenty of oxygen, the brain will have all that it needs and no longer hurt.”

This sounds really stupid, and too simple to help... yet, I know he is crazy in part, because he is a genius. I've seen him memorize and discuss some amazingly abstract and technical topics in science that usually only scientists in the field for twenty years can understand.

“Ok Saeed. I'll focus more on my breath while I am doing Yoga and meditation and stuff. Thanks for the tip. Can I go now?”

“No. You need to focus on breathing more **all** the time.”

“How can I do that while I am in a lecture hall trying to learn quantum mechanics?”

“Learning quantum mechanics is when you need the **most** breathing of all!”

“Ok. I will breathe deeply all the time, even while I'm sleeping. Can I go now?”

“Yes. Keep breathing. And hurry up healing your headache. I want you to make us some nano-gold enlightenment potions when you are ready. Also, get better soon because I am sick until you are healed.”

He flinched and squinted, and, with his elbow on the picnic table, put his hand on his right eye. He was either a lucky guesser, or actually did appear to suddenly have a headache in the exact same location that I did...

Chapter 30; Importance #25; MS

I took a class on self-hypnosis from a

Wayne Dyer Doppelganger

I walked by a sign on campus which read,
"Improve learning by 5X
Learn self-hypnosis!"

That sounds interesting. Ever since my headache started, I have felt like my brain is learning at only 10% of its ability. I have trouble remembering things and listening and thinking about complex ideas, like I need to for a Ph.D. in Chemistry! Maybe this will help!

I walked to the classroom where it was held, and shook hands with the teacher, who was a large, bald, white, elderly man, with large eyes and a strong body. He looked like a spitting image of Wayne Dyer, the Western self-help and meditation guy who has been called the Deepak Chopra of the West.

"Today I am going to teach you self-hypnosis. Hypnosis is a real and powerful thing. It has unfortunately, been banned in courts because of one false-testimony, but if it is done correctly, it can help a person remember many details of a crime scene

which otherwise would be lost. I have also used it effectively to help patients recall memories which they have repressed, to help them deal with traumatic past events, and have also used it to help people forget traumatic events. It's real. It's powerful."

We sat in a circular table. There were about ten of us. He continued.

"The technique I'm going to teach you asks you to imagine you are descending in an elevator, because the feeling of descending in an elevator helps the mind relax and let go. When you reach the bottom, the doors will open and you will be in your Happy Place."

Ha! This is going to be cheesy, like Fight Club, where those self-help groups ask the patients suffering with cancer to go to their Happy Place. Oh man, I think I wasted my money.

But Wayne wanna-be wasn't joking. He was dead serious, and had a very powerful and calm demeanor in general which helped me avoid laughing out loud.

"So I want you to decide what kind of Happy Place you want to create, so that when the doors open, you will walk into your Happy Place. Within your Happy Place, you can create as many rooms, or areas as you need. If you need to be healed, you can invent a doctor's office or something where you can go to heal yourself."

*Oh wait! Maybe this **can** help me... maybe it can help with my headache!*

"You can create regions in your Happy Place to relax, or regions to increase your energy. You can say, 'I am at Energy Level 2 right now, and after I wake up, I will be at Energy Level 8', and then the brain will respond by releasing the right chemicals, such as adrenaline, and you can wake yourself up at any time in your life to give you more focus.

You can create any regions you need for any situation in life. For this class, we are going to focus on remembering what you learned in class. So I want you to create a room with some old VHS tape players which are connected to multiple TV screens.

What you will do is see yourself walking into that room, shut the door, and then pull out the tape with a label for whatever class you want to remember and learn better. The tape might be labeled 'Biology 101, Sept. 23, ribosomes' for instance. Then you will insert the tape and watch it without pausing it, and it will show you everything you saw and heard in class. A 60-minute class takes about 5-10 minutes to view. View it as many times as you need. The more you view it, the better you will learn it, and more details will come up with each viewing. Let's begin."

I'm going to use this for remembering classes later, but for now, I want to try to use it to heal my headache.

The instructor continued, in his **low, calm voice**.

"Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Breathe in. Breathe out. You now have to trick your mind into thinking that you cannot open your eyes. If you can do this, then you can self-hypnotize. Do it. Try to open your eyes."

I opened my eyes, and so did some of the other students. However, some students' eyelids just fluttered.

This is kinda dumb. Ok whatever- I'll play along I guess.

"Keep trying. That's ok. It takes practice. Get to a state where you are not able to open your eyes."

Pause

"Excellent. We are all ready. Now pretend you are in a building on the tenth floor, looking at an old-fashioned elevator with numbers for each floor up-above which light up"

In my mind's eye, I saw a rectangular, brick, simple building, ten stories tall in the middle of a desert with no roads. There were just two windows on each side of the building on each floor. It was a boring, 1950's or communist-style drab building. The image zoomed up and through the tenth floor, and I saw shiny, stainless steel elevator doors in front of me, with old-fashioned circular lights above the door which read B, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. They were all dim, and unilluminated, and grey with black letters behind a yellow background.

"Push the button to go down to the basement floor"

I saw a cartoonish-version of my hand push the down arrow on the right side of the elevator. The down button illuminated, and the “B” above the door illuminated. I looked and saw the lights slowly traverse from B to 10. When the circular “10” was illuminated with its antique yellow hue, I heard a satisfying, “Ding!” like I have heard in old elevators.

The doors opened, and I walked in.

To my surprise, there was a monkey bellboy in the right corner standing in traditional red regalia, waiting to be of service to me.

“Uhhh, basement floor please” I told the monkey.

“Eee-ee-er-er-ah” it replied pleasantly, as if to say, “You got it boss, going down to the basement floor”.

It’s hairy, strong, little arm reached in front and pushed “B”, on the panel and it stayed illuminated.

The doors closed, and it was just me and a monkey in an elevator.

What... the... fuck...

I looked above the closing doors and saw the number ten illuminated. With a jolt, I felt the elevator start to go down, and then the number nine was illuminated.

“As you watch each number go down and go down a floor, you are going deeper in relaxation. With each floor you are getting twice as relaxed and twice as deep in hypnosis.”

Floor 8.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

I felt myself descend in the elevator another floor.

Floor 7.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 6.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 5.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 4

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 3.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 2.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

Floor 1.

“Twice as deep. Twice as relaxed”

The circular “B” became illuminated. “Ding!”

“Er uh” the monkey said in a friendly manner, tipping its cylindrical, white hat towards me. I flipped a coin into his hat, and he looked very happy with the tip.

I looked at the doors and they slowly opened. From drab, red bricks, and steel doors, I now saw a beautiful splash of green color which widened as the doors opened. It was bright. My eyes took time adjusting.

I stood there for a while, a bit confused. I looked back. The monkey bellboy in red and white with brass buttons was politely holding the door open for me, and nodded as if to say, “go ahead, you can enter. It is safe.”

I walked into my Happy Place. It was basically as I imagined the Garden of Eden to look. It was filled with beautiful trees, some with fruit, and some just for beauty.

Immediately in front of the doors was a circular fountain with rough-hewn, pale stones surrounding it.

There was sunshine coming from the left, falling gently on my skin. There were beautiful birds flying around the beautiful blue sky, happily chirping, and landing softly on branches between trees. There was a stone path which led to the left, and one which led to the right. I had a feeling that they formed an oval throughout the garden, and that the doors or rooms that I could create would be on either side of the path.

I kept walking to the right, and to my surprise, suddenly saw an 8’2” large, bright yellow standing bird.

“Big Bird!” I exclaimed.

“Hello. I haven’t seen you in a while” he said in his characteristically nervous and froggy-throated voice.

"I know! I used to love you!"

"Used, to!" he fruffled his feathers, "Oh, well, my! I've been here this whole time! I've never left!"

"Oh, sorry, I mean, yes, I guess I'll always love you."

"Thank you. That's better. Us friends have to stick around with each other you know."

"Yes" I said, happy and beaming to finally meet a childhood hero of mine.

"Say, Big Bird, do you know where the Healing Center is?"

"Oh, you want to go to the Healing Center do you? Of course! That is the most-important place, so the Healing Center takes up the whole Center of course, silly!"

"Thank you! Bye! See you around Big Bird!"

"Toodle-loo! Don't be a stranger!" said the representation of my inner-child.

I kept walking and saw a door on the left made of vines. I entered.

I saw what looked like an operating room, except with plants growing everywhere, and no roof. There were lots of medical instruments laying around, neatly organized onto white cloths. In the center was a dentist-type, beige, leather reclining chair and a giant, 12' by 5' clear prismatic crystal hoisted in a machine which, evidently, was for spinning it and moving it in any direction up or down or left or right. The hexagonal, huge prism was cut to have a sharp point with many triangles. It looked powerful and ominous.

A doctor hidden in all-white doctor's clothes and face mask and apron motioned for me to sit down.

I laid down.

"And what seems to be the problem today?" he asked in a warm, confident manner, such as is the way of many doctors. He seemed to have a German accent.

"I'd like to heal my headache."

He put on a Steampunk-type sophisticated set of glasses which looked like the glasses they use to check your eyes at an Optometrist's office. He quickly flipped through almost all one-hundred of the swiveling eye-pieces in front of him until he found a set that he liked. He used that set to look through my skull into the source of my headache.

"Ahhhh yes. I zee za problem. Eet is in zer very deep. But don't worry. Vee have zee highest-powered healing crystal heah which takes all zee healing pover of zee sun and concentrates it on zee aching body. It can heal anything!"

I felt my body start to recline.

"Just relax"

"Just relax", he said.

I laid down, and then saw the huge crystal move with amazing precision and speed as many gears and pneumatic pumps lifted the heavy crystal higher and higher in the air. It then swiveled around quickly and pointed directly at my right eye, just where it hurt the most.

The whole platform which the doctor, the chair and the crystal all rested on spun so that the sun would hit the crystal in the most-direct fashion.

Suddenly, a huge bolt of healing sun energy poured from the sun, through the crystal, and then concentrated into a fire-like beam into my head. I felt my head get warmer.

I just sat there for a while as a steady stream of fiery sun-energy blasted into my eye. The beam just kept streaming in and in and in. Like a welder, keeping a beam on metal, melting it, I imagined sun-energy pouring onto my head, melting my headache. The doctor's steampunk, circular glasses with copper rims and sides reflected the image of the powerful light beam and he smiled a manic smile like Hephaestus himself might have had while welding a new contraption.

"E-e-xcellent. Just a little longa for today's dosage."

"Start making your way back to the elevator"

"Well, I gotta go. Thank you doctor!"

“Yess, certainly. That is vat I am heah for”.

I walked out of the Healing Center and decided to walk back to the elevator on the other side of the garden. So I walked quickly back, telling myself I would have to come back soon. Just as I was about to get to the elevator door and fountain, a large lion stood on the path, blocking my way.

He was majestic. His large head was held with power and grace, and his mane flowed in the wind. I think ever since I read *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* series, by C. S. Lewis, God has been represented to me as a lion, in some manner. The lion slowly backed away and let me push the button on the elevator.

The doors opened.

“Ding!”

In contrast to the bright, outdoors, I entered the grey and drab, dark elevator, illuminated with old lights.

The monkey was still there and tipped his hat, and said, “Eeh eh eh” and he pushed the number “10”, knowing where I was going.

Back up, up, up. B, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

“Ding!”

The ten was illuminated in yellow, and the doors opened.

“I’m going to count backwards from five. When I get to one, I will snap my fingers, and you will be able to open your eyes. You will be alert and refreshed and ready to be awoken by the time I get to one. Five...”

I waved goodbye to the monkey and it smiled and waved back.

“Four...”

I walked out of the elevator and looked back.

“Three...”

The doors slowly closed

“Two...”

My mind’s eye zoomed out of the room to reveal the rectangular, ten-floor brick building with two windows on each floor in the middle of a desert that had a cracked floor of mud.

Maybe it was the bottom of a once-salty lake that I had been to as a child.

“One...”

-Snap!

I opened my eyes on command and was somewhat surprised to see myself sitting at the same circular table I began, surrounded by about ten people and a Wayne Dyer doppelganger.

Chapter 31; Importance #16; B

Nutrition; A fat, anti-hippy nutritionist reminds me that I should follow science (esp. if I am getting a Ph.D. in chemistry!)

I walked into the small, UH medical office, "I'm Elon Sagan. I'm here for an appointment with the nutritionist."

"Fill out this paperwork, and she'll be right with you."

I finished the paperwork and read some Time articles about the Iraq war, which got me in a bad mood.

"Right this way" the nurse led me to a small office, where a short, fat, irritated woman looked at me and said, "Have a seat".

This is the nutritionist? How am I to take advice from someone who doesn't even take care of her body?

"So you are here because you have headache's huh? Tell me what you eat on an average day from the moment you wake up to when you go to sleep."

"I am vegan, so I just eat cereal with soy milk in the morning, and then I wash dishes at Ono Pono, and in return, get some kind of delicious vegi, bean, and rice lunch or soup or avocado sandwich, and then I eat about two bean burritos or something like that for dinner."

She paused while she took notes.

“That’s it? No snacks? No sides with the burritos?”

“Ummm, yeah, that’s it basically. With my, uh, living situation, it is difficult to eat midnight snacks, although sometimes I would like to.”

“Ok, and I see that you have struggled with anemia off-and-on due to the vegan diet.”

“Yes, I wasn’t doing it very well, but now I am doing it better”

She suddenly seemed really irritated.

“You know, I see a lot of people like you on this campus. I bet you are Vegan because of environmental and animal rights reasons, right?”

“Yes, and spiritual- karma and so on. Actually, I think it is healthier too.”

Now she seemed really irritated.

“No! It’s not healthier!”

“Who told you that? The meat and dairy association and special interests which have infiltrated the FDA and nutrition profession?”

“What? No! There’s no conspiracy. Nutrition is science. You should know that! If you are getting a Ph.D. in chemistry, you of all people should be pro-science and not get caught up with the bogus claims by new-agey types. I bet you shop at natural food stores, don’t you.”

“Of course. It is healthier.”

“No! It’s not! Look at you! You are not healthy! You are pale and gaunt in the face. You are too skinny and not eating enough!”

“Yeah, I can tell you don’t have a problem with eating” I said. I guess I can be a real asshole sometimes. I don’t discriminate against crazy people or wierdos or sexual orientation or race or religion like most people do... but I guess the one group of people that have always bugged me are fat people. They don’t look beautiful. They don’t look healthy. They

are spreading their disease everywhere, getting higher rates of diabetes and all sorts of problems, increasing the cost of health care for healthy people like me. It is actually really bad. I need to get over it.

“I have a thyroid problem. Anyway, if you really want to be a scientist, you should know that most of that stuff they try to sell you at those natural food stores and vitamins are all BS and have no scientific backing. I bet you like high Amino Acid soy sauce don’t you?”

“Yes”

“Well, did you know that they were caught exaggerating the number of grams of protein you get in the soy sauce? It’s all a scam like everything else with a lot of natural stuff. Do you really want to support a company like that which lies to you?”

“Yes”

“Well now you are just being ridiculous and not making sense. Let me tell you something. Guess how many vegetarians and vegans I see here who aren’t getting enough protein and iron and have headaches, and anemia, and hair falling out and look like you?”

“I don’t know, ten a year?”

“Yes! Even more! Guess how many people come in here with those problems who eat McDonald’s every day and an average, high-meat American diet?”

“I don’t know, but they are increasing health care for all the rest of us, and getting fat, and having heart problems, and that’s not good. The World Health Organization now says that diabetes, heart problems and other complications from the increase in world-wide obesity is now the world’s greatest health concern, even more than infectious diseases.”

“Well, maybe you have some good points, but for the most part, they are healthy! They don’t have the same problems you do! If you really want to get better, you might want to consider how much you will be willing to relax your Vegan diet and standards and morals until you get better. I think it will help

you. I'm serious. I don't see people going in ambulances who eat McDonald's. I see people like you, people who don't eat enough in general, and don't eat enough protein and iron especially."

"Hmmm", I said, fairly skeptical, and not liking how nasty our conversation seemed.

"Even if your iron levels are improving, protein is very important and might have something to do with your headache. Your body needs protein, as you probably know, to carry out basically every reaction, and operate everything, not just build muscle."

"Yes. And a slice of bread with butter or margarine has the correct ratio of carbs, fat, and protein that the body needs."

"Maybe, but I want you to try to eat an excessive amount of protein from now on until you feel better, and eat anything your body craves. Listen to your body. I bet you avoid salt too."

"Yes, I'm a healthnut" I said, but starting to see the irony in that statement, if indeed, I were to look in the mirror and be honest with myself and see a sickly-looking individual staring back.

"Don't! Salt is good for you! Yes, most Americans eat too much, but if your body is craving it, then eat it! As I was saying, some proteins are helpful for thinning out the blood, which allows blood to get into hard-to-reach, small capillaries. You know about capillaries, I'm sure. So if you eat more protein, you may find that the blood is better-able to provide your brain with oxygen and nutrients, and your headaches and general energy level should improve. I want you to think seriously about relaxing your vegan lifestyle until you feel better, and eating a lot of protein and iron, and eating what you crave and taking care of yourself better, in general. Do this, and then keep track of what you eat on this chart, and come back in a week."

"Ok. Thanks. Bye." *But I purposely want to sacrifice my body for the sake of others, like innocent animals living in a hell of confined cages. Doesn't she get it?*

“And don’t believe everything you hear. I suggest applying the same rigor that you apply to your scientific experiments to every bit of information you hear.”

I did what she said, and started looking and feeling healthier. It didn’t cure my headache, so it wasn’t the main cause of the headache, but it definitely improved it by another 2%. I remember really not holding her in high esteem because of her weight and really not liking her at all, but she told me exactly what I needed to hear at that point in my life!

Chapter 32; Importance #29; MS

*Learning to not just relax, but also relax my
morals. Think grey, not black and white*

As I took the angry nutritionist's advice to heart, even though I disagreed with her on a lot of points, and didn't like her, I started to see some wisdom in relaxing my vegan lifestyle.

Since I lived in a tent, I only had basic instruments to my disposal, like microwaves, in various dorms and student break rooms, so eating a full-course vegan meal was very difficult.

I reasoned that even if everyone reduced their meat-intake that would reduce the suffering in the world, which would still be helpful. If everyone ate only organic, free-range meat, then there would be very little environmental or animal rights issues at all in the world, which would be great!

I realized that I gotten to a state of thinking self-righteously and very either-or and black and white. I knew that in reality, "truth lies in paradox" and that the reality of the universe and morality was grey, not black and white, and that situations and context were important.

I therefore started relaxing my morals and explored various faiths, not just Christianity.

Sunny and I, and eventually Francine from the full moon gathering, started going to Hare Krishna and other Hindu services

frequently. We went to Buddhist temples. I was surprised to see how accepting the Buddhists were.

“Keep your religion” they said, “don’t change it for Buddhism. You may keep it and integrate it with Buddhism. Buddhism is more like a technique for training your mind. It does not require allegiance. It encourages you to experiment for yourself to find what is true.”

After hearing several Buddhists say things like that, even the Dalai Lama himself, who I saw with Francine on Maui, I started to understand why Einstein said that Buddhism is the religion of the future. It is the perfect religion for scientists because there is no hard and fast dogma. To a scientist, dogma is the very antithesis of science. I was following the Vegan New Age dogma without testing it, and now I started testing it. Buddhists encourage experimentation, and are fine with followers either believing in God or not.

I started to realize that the rigidity of the past Fundamental Christian Evangelical groups I had been part of gave me unneeded guilt, and made me feel like I did not belong, and that probably played a role in the formation and continuation of my headache.

Rigid thinking, in general is the best way I can describe the past contributions to my headache. I mentioned before that environmental guilt was a big source of the headache, which was part of a rigid idea that I invented which said that I was a big part of the problem. Religions in general, I was finding, all have their own rigid thinking. Buddhism and mystical branches of each religion are a bit of an exception, but even Buddhism has been tainted by human traditions and needs for material gain and selfishness.

I was slowly seeing that my own New Age hippy Self (a big part of my identity and ego), was too rigid. The mean and angry nutritionist was right. I needed to start applying the freeing power of science as a tool to every assumption or concept I came across.

Instead of just repeating things I heard, like most people do, I began questioning more, and not accepting an answer unless there were convincing scientific experiments to back something up. This also meant that I had to start getting more comfortable with not having an opinion about everything and instead, existing in a “no-man’s-land” of uncertainty regarding any topic or idea that did not have a strong scientific consensus.

The ego hates uncertainty; for in the vapors of nothingness and waiting, the organism might just realize that the ego is also vapors of nothingness. The mass-production of “us versus them” insanity which we see on the superorganism level of humanity play out in the form of wars, racism, and destruction of the planet comes from the summation of our own individual insanity of “us versus them” including “me versus nature”. Our ego evolved to make boundaries between self and others at first, for very practical reasons, but we have exaggerated its usefulness.

My ego essentially had to fight two different battles on two fronts. On the one side, there were drum circles, full moon gatherings, and a wide variety of spiritual support groups which were encouraging me to think with my heart and experience the blissful experience of letting go of control. On the other side, there was science. Science was encouraging me to let go of all rigid truths and morals that I had always just assumed to be true or thought were true with a rigid mind frame.

With each black and white false idol that I removed with Ockham’s razor, to be replaced with grey, I saw that all these illusionary delineations were created by the ego and gave the ego a sense of certainty and comforting “realness” about it. My mind was a chess board and I slowly saw each piece evaporate and all the squares turn grey, leaving a terrifyingly empty grey room.

All that was left was a general feeling of awe at the universe being a collection of beautiful dancing atoms and energy, and that I am lucky enough to have some kind of limited existence and knowledge of that dance, but there was no

particular corner I could claim, as if at a flea market and say, "That's mine! That's me!".

Slowly, my ego was losing control of the reigns, and it backed itself into a corner, very confused, and scared. My inner child, Big Bird, who I started conversing with occasionally, was also scared.

"What are we going to do?", asked Big Bird nervously while the greyness started creeping towards him. Big Bird looked down and was shocked to see a bright yellow feather turning grey.

Chapter 33; Importance #4; M.S

Everything is perfect!

Francine, Sunny, and an Indian friend, Naji, who I had met at the Hare Krishna temple started hanging out with me a lot. We went to see a very unique play held by a lot of the Open Mic hippy, New-Agey crowd, many of them who were excited about the 2012 upcoming date on the Mayan calendar.

The play started with Native Americans with feathers dancing around a fire. It showed a rise and fall of a culture, and then a dancer addressed the crowd and said, "Cycles upon cycles. One ending leads to a new beginning. Everything is perfect. Everything changes and improves with the next cycle."

Then it showed Babylonians building beautiful buildings and they acted out the rise and fall of that culture. At the end of which, a Babylonian, similarly addressed the crowd and said, "Cycles upon cycles. One ending leads to a new beginning. Everything is perfect. Everything changes and improves with the next cycle."

This repeated itself with Mayans and the Chinese, and African cultures. Often, they mentioned that the collapse of their

cultures came from taking too much from wars or the environment.

The second-to-last cycle was the rise and fall of European culture, with it ending in the Medieval ages.

The last cycle was today's global, modern culture spawned by science and the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Age and Capitalism.

It showed the whole economy and environment collapsing throughout the Earth in the future, in 2012. From the ashes of our current civilization, came a kind of hippy-envisioned utopia where people make their own culture with their friends (like we did during Open Mics and Full Moon Gatherings) and where everyone barter with each other and lives in peace and harmony with each other and the environment.

Unfortunately, the way I summarized it makes it seem pretty silly, especially since nothing changed after 2012!

Or did it? The collection of human opinions and ideas are always shifting and changing. Are we currently in the middle of a huge change in the status quo? Right around 2012, Uber and other internet-service based trading platforms popped up. There is now a powerful "Gig" economy, where people do small tasks, like drive cars or deliver packages, or do odd-jobs on TaskRabbit or Craigslist or Angie's list, freeing people to pursue interests and hobbies instead of careers.

Hipster-mentality is spreading and combining with disenfranchised youth who no longer are excited about pursuing careers, and don't live to work, but only work to live. They live for collecting music, and doing art, and writing ebooks, and going to meetups and watching B-rated horror movies. Is the world changing? Yes. Always. But how?

Though the whole 2012 thing seems silly and misinterpreted, I still took a lot away from that play. The main theme was exactly what I needed to hear at that time.

In my head, I was thinking that my actions, along with everyone else's will condemn us to a horrible economic, war-torn

system with all of us suffering in pollution and global warming and that things will only get worse.

However, the play made me realize, that there is no historical basis for this... instead, quite the opposite. Human life has continually improved. Because of science and technology (esp. modern medicine), humans today live better, longer, and with more abilities than any of the ancient kings of old had ever dreamed of.

Ancient kings throughout the world often **claimed** to be gods, but we today, actually **are gods!** We are gods of technology, gods of our own fate, with more upward mobility than ever before, gods of technology, gods of knowledge with the internet, at our fingertips. Gone are the days where we only could look to superstition to find out how to understand something. Now we can ask Siri or Cortana or look online ourselves and figure it out in two minutes!

The world is not all doom and gloom. Everything is actually improving. Even DDT and CFCs are banned. Sure, things get worse before they get better, and we tend to wait too long while things get bad... but we **are** an intelligent species with a heart that cares. We do learn and fix things. We are improving.

Everything is perfect and exactly as it needs to be.

The play mentioned that the growing pains and struggle towards utopia is part of the plan. It was a hippy-version of many similar ideas I had heard in Evangelical circles. I had heard things about "God's Plan" and the "Kingdom of God" but it never rang true to me since it was often in reference to things such as an excuse for the Iraq War.

It blew my mind; this new spin on 'fate' and 'God's plan'.

Could it be that not only is everything improving, but everything is exactly as it should be?

My ego said, "Nooo! I am wrapped up in the idea of guilt. That is who I am! Everyone is blind to all the injustices in the

world, and I need to do something about it! That is who I am! Everything is doomed! We need to save the planet now!”

The ‘me’ behind the ‘me’, the ‘mover’, the ‘witness’, said, “No. This feels right. Everything really is perfect. Things in the world and in your own life are improving. Not only is everything improving, and we will one day be ok... Everything is already perfect. The **striving** is part of the perfection. The angst towards the suffering is part of the perfection, but it is not the angst which will heal us. We don’t need healing. We are already perfect, and so is everything else.”

Chapter 34; Importance #15; B

redneck guy in child molester van tells me Take

care of yourself! Be selfish! I realized I am The

Mangy Cat.

I walked up to one of my many homeless friends, Jacques and asked him what he was doing.

“Ohhh, feeding the cats. This one might not make it much longer I am afraid” he replied in a thick French accent.

Jacques was from France and had a Ph.D. and used to be a professor at UH, but now lived in a cramped car filled with donated cat food and took care of all the stray cats on campus.

I looked at the black cat he was referring to. It was laying on its side very still. Each struggling breath revealed its ribcage. Its hair was stiff and ruffled. At first glance, it looked like it was just relaxing, but it had some kind of odd, out-of-it blank stare that I had never seen in a cat before.

“What’s wrong with him?”

“Eee is refusing to eat. You see, most cats groom themselves and help each other groom one another, and that is why most cats you see are how you say, ealthyy-lookING. I am petting him now, and combing his hair because I am ‘oping that

if I can help him improve 'is self-image and self-esteem, I can help him eat and 'ave the desire to live."

I was stunned.

"I have never heard of such a thing. You talk about him like he is a human with a set of complex human psychology."

"But of course! Of course he is like a human" he made some kind of snorting sound, "he is every bit like a human with all the human needs to feel loved and with a purpose in life. 'Eee 'as lost his meaning of life."

The whole thing freaked me out. A depressed cat? Really? Low self-esteem... low self-image... lost meaning of life?

A few weeks later, I bought some groceries at a natural food store, and tried unsuccessfully to carry my groceries on my bike handles.

The bike wiggled left and right. I bought a heavy gallon of cider in glass and one small deviation to the right would swing my whole bike too far right.

As I pulled up between some cars, I accidently fell a bit against a white van with no windows but the front. I scrapped a little paint off accidently with the side of my bike handle.

"Goddammit. Son-of-a-bitch! Fuck!" mumbled a sketchy voice from inside the van which looked like something a child-molester would drive.

"Excuse me? What did you say? I'm sorry for bumping into your van. Do you want \$20 or something?" I pulled up closer to the driver. He was a skinny, white, red-neck-looking rough guy.

"I said 'fuck' and 'watch where you are going'. No I don't want your money" he said in an angry and gravelly voice, still low in volume. He thought for a moment, and then said, "What I **want** is for you to take care of yourself."

"What?"

"Yeah, you're just meandering all over the place. You're not taking care of yourself. You need to take care of yourself! Just do that ok?"

“Hmmm ok...”

And then he sped off. Did he think I was drunk? What was that guy’s problem?

The next time I had access to a mirror I took an honest self-assessment of how I looked. I was overall proud of my triathlete body. But I looked more carefully.

*I guess the nutritionist is right. I need to eat more. I’m too skinny. My face looks like a skeleton, all weird and gaunt. My hair is always messed up. I smell bad. Is that what that guy meant about taking care of myself? I wasn’t drunk, I was just having a hard time maneuvering my bike. I was just also kind of ‘out of it’ like I always am. I’m probably a bit **too** ‘out-of-it’... like that mangy cat.*

Oh shit!

I

AM

the

Mangy

Cat!

I ran back to where I saw The Mangy Cat, desperately wanting to pet it, comb it, give it a bath, bottle-feed it milk... whatever it needed! It can’t give up! I understand now! I am just like it. I **am** the mangy cat. Maybe if I can figure out how to help itself, and get better, and take pride in itself instead of taking pride in how mangy it has become, then I can get it to want to eat and survive, and then I will learn how to help myself and my headache too!

“Jacques! Jacques! Where is the Mangy Cat? I understand now! I want to help it!”

Jacques, with his permanently bent back and white hair and whiskers, and dirty clothes over his frail body turned to me, and, fighting back tears, said, “I’m sorry my friend. This one is

gone. 'Ee didn't make it. I tried. I tried. Sometimes, you cannot force someone to take care of themselves."

I thought of my resistance to shaving my dreads. I thought of how my only fights with my Mom where about the need to value cleanliness, and take better care of myself. I had resented corporate, sold-out, superficial, over-consumptive, conspicuous consumption, polluting culture, but had rebelled too far.

I grabbed Jacques and we hugged each other and we both cried.

He understood.

He was the Mangy Cat too.

Chapter 35; Importance #40; MS

Crazy Jewish Palm-reading astrologer

frenemy helps me focus on my destiny

I finally agreed to let a frenemy of mine read my palm and give me a “reading”. I was highly skeptical of such things, but he was a friend and I always told him I would let him do a reading.

The reading was totally bogus and a silly waste of time, as any scientist will tell you, but as a counselor, and friend, he actually picked up on many things based on my responses to his questions, and body language. He should be good at that after all; it was how he made a living.

He was just like a horse that was once famous for being able to add. He picked up on very subtle cues from tonal inflection, and body language. The horse, was found to **not** be able to add, but it is even more astonishing to me what it **was** doing. A person would ask the horse “What is two plus three?” in front of a crowd. Then, it would stomp its foot. Once it got to five stomps, the mood, attitude, level of excitement peaked and changed, and he picked up on that, and so stopped stomping, and everyone would cheer. It looked like the horse could add, but it, like most mammals, was just very sensitive to emotions, and

could effectively “read the mind” of the crowd to a certain extent.

My astrologer was like a horse who pretended to add. However, he made for one of the best councilors I’ve met because he had honed his ability to read people’s faces, tonal inflection, and overall body language, etc. Of course, to stay in business, he didn’t admit to this, and probably even convinced himself that he was doing something spiritual and mystical by “reading” people.

“So I’m sensing that you are really hard on yourself” he said.

“Yes, especially about the state of the world.”

“Hmmm yes, I was just thinking that. You are an Earthy guy and you are taking the world’s problems onto yourself. You need to let go of all that. It’s good to have passions, but not at the expense of yourself. You think by belittling yourself, you are making the world better, but actually, if you make yourself weaker, and are too unselfish, you won’t be able to help **anybody!** You need to learn that it is ok to be selfish sometimes. You need to take care of yourself first. After that, then you will be able to help others and follow your destiny to help others and the environment.

Here is what you should do, starting tonight. You should look at yourself and give yourself positive affirmations every night before bed and every morning. You need to boost your confidence. You need to take time out of the day to do something **you** want to do. You need to eat more, and eat whatever you want. Find things which make you laugh, and do them.”

“Yeah, thanks, man. I think you are right! I always thought it was weird how some Christians beat themselves with whips to feel the suffering of Jesus, but I guess with such a focus on humbling oneself before God and a goal to be unselfish, I have been beating myself up. **That**, combined with a guilt about the state of the environment, and wanting to rebel has made me want to make myself last in order to feel humble and like I am

helping others, but yeah, it totally makes sense that if I don't take care of myself, I won't be able to help people."

"Yes! Think about the symbols of other religions. Like for Buddhism, there is a big, fat, happy, laughing Buddha, who also, by the way, went through a period where he was too hard on himself and nearly starved himself to death. Then, think about Christianity's symbol. It is a cross. It is a person dying on a cross. I'm all for helping people, and not being too selfish, but don't you think focusing on self-sacrifice is a little too extreme the other way? Is it really healthy to have a strong focus on self-sacrifice?"

Chapter 36; Importance #39; M.S

*Positive Affirmation- Shoot! I didnt want this to
be another cheesy self-help book! Doh!*

In addition to the Hare Krishna-type chant which I chanted and meditated on occasionally, I also started saying these positive affirmations:

Love
I AM
I AM Love
I AM God's faithful steward and servant
I move only by the will of the Holy Spirit
I am washed white as snow by the blood of Jesus
I AM Love
I AM
Love

Love
For today only,
Anger not,
Worry not,
Do your work with appreciation,

Be kind to all,
And,
Love

The latter one being an important meditation for Reiki practitioners that Sunny had taught me. Well, I added the words, “love” since I feel that is the most important thing.

I also occasionally chanted and prayed both the Catholic Rosary and Orthodox version of the Rosary. The Orthodox prayer beads were in the same location as the Rosary basically, and the “Our Father...” is in the same location, but instead of Hail Mary, there is this prayer:

“Lord Jesus Christ, forgive me, a sinner” or in some translations, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner”. This was recommended to “say always” in Ephesians 6:17, and can be used as a “sword of the spirit”, and Orthodox Christians and monks take it pretty seriously, chanting it often. The little-known story goes that the Catholics then took the idea of the Orthodox prayer rope and altered it, replacing the Ephesians prayer for the Hail Mary.

My prayers and positive affirmations tended to be Christian-like, since that was what I was still most comfortable with, even though many Christians would say, and **did** say, that I am not a Christian and that would hurt my feelings continually until my ego stopped identifying with that label.

While the positive affirmations and prayer and meditation helped me try to let go of the control of the ego, and instead, seek the Light, God, and love... thanks to my frenemy, I also started to remember that I had heard, “in order to love others, you must love yourself.”

I was slowly starting to realize that I didn’t love myself. I even maybe hated myself. I knew I hated myself because of any use of fossil fuels etc, but I **didn’t** know that it extended much deeper than that, and that my ego had tricked me into having

false humility. In fact, I had become proud of how much I could debase and punish myself.

There are a lot of self-help books about positive affirmation, and many seem to help people. The main thing though that helped me was just an overall attitude shift: I need to love myself, so that I may love others. I need to put myself first, not in a bad selfish way, but in a way that leads me to helping others.

It is easy to say these things, and read them and say intellectually, “Oh yeah, duh, I knew that. That’s easy.” But it is another thing to actually let it sink deep down inside one’s psyche. That might be why so many people of various faiths chant. By chanting names of God or love or prayers, perhaps it is really like a positive affirmation which works its way down deeper beyond the intellectual frame of ourselves until it touches the “soul” (or subconscious etc.) and becomes our whole way of thinking and being.

It is like the difference I was starting to see between playing an instrument intellectually, and letting myself **become** the instrument and superorganism.

Another prayer that I prayed often during this time was from St. Francis, which begins, “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...”

I have to **become** the instrument. I have to **become** love. If I try to love, I’ll mess it up. I have to **be** love, and that includes loving myself, first and foremost, as much as I wanted to resist that idea.

I meet a lot of people, especially women, who live with a lot of insecurity and anxiety. I think a lot of us belittle ourselves, and would do well to first learn to forgive ourselves and love ourselves.

Here is a quote which really helped me during this time which I thought (like a lot of people) came from Nelson Mandela, but actually was said by an interesting, spiritually-inclined person named Marriane Williamson:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Chapter 37; Importance #28; 8

Sought Spiritual Support Group;

gave me aromatherapy with spearmint

oil on the beach

One day, after getting photographed swimming naked underwater with Francine and some sea turtles on the North Shore by a photographer friend of mine, we checked out a very *Hawaiian* Christian group.

We arrived late, in wet clothes.

“Is this the right place?” Francine asked.

“Yeah, I think so. They said to just go to this beach and look for one of those barbeque structures.”

We got out of my beat-up 1990’s Ford Bronco which only started 50% of the time, and looked for a structure. *I hope my car starts. We are kinda far from Honolulu. It should be ok. It mostly has problems when it is hot, and it’s going to be dark soon.*

We eventually heard some sweet, gentle music, and walked towards it and found the group of 40 locals worshipping with their hands up and eyes closed while guitarists and ukulele players and drummers led the music.

The music stopped and a worship leader began praying slowly in *Hawaiian* and English.

“Praise God! We know that he Aloha ko Iesu, and we love you too Jesus, our precious Iesu. Aloha ke akua. Praise Jesus, Iesu, and Ka ‘Uhane Hemolele, the Holy Spirit. We come here today to gather in worship with our brothas and sistas, our ‘ohana, and we praise Iesu for being your precious keiki. As we listen to the ocean, and feel the wind in this holy place, we feel your mana, tha mana of the land of Hawai’i, the ‘aina, coursing with your power and love, strengthening us, holding us, loving us, sharing your power with us, and we give you thanks.

Come, Ka ‘Uhane Hemolele, be with us now as we worship you, all that is good and beautiful.”

That’s cool that even though they are apparently Pentecostal-type Christians, they believe in mana, the life-force which exists in all life and all creation. Hawaiians must traditionally believe in mana. I have only heard of mana in video games or fantasy novels. Each wizard is required to build up a certain amount of mana- increase his power- before able to cast a certain spell. What spell are these people wanting to cast with the Earth-power and Holy-Spirit-power they are invoking? They seem to just want to bring the power to themselves to heal themselves and others and spread love wherever they go!

This reminds me of the healing rock that Sunny and I just visited which Hindus have built a shrine around. I’m still not sure what I think about all this, but I definitely remember feeling some kind of presence, some kind of power in that rock, and I sense it here now...

At the end of the service, we talked and prayed.

“Oh! You have headache? Oh! You got to talk to our healer-man!”

An old, but healthy Asian guy was introduced to me and looked me in the eyes and said, “Ahhhh, here. This will help.”

Then he pulled out a vial and put lots of oil on my head, especially between my eyes. It smelled like spearmint oil.

“Thank you, brother.”

“Shoots” he said and gave me a shaka sign and walked away.

The oil seemed to help! Again, it didn't cure the huge, nasty headache... but gave me another 2% relief after a few months. I bought some spearmint oil, and applied it every morning and evening for awhile after that. A lot of people claim benefits from aromatherapy. Mostly, it helps people feel calm, and relaxed, which decreases stress, and stress is a major cause of headaches and an aggravating factor to almost every disease.

I liked the powerful smell of it, and it probably encouraged me to breathe deeper breaths.

Saeed would approve.

Don't worry Saeed, I'm getting better. I'm getting better! I can very-slightly perceive an improvement every month! I will be healed, so that you are no longer sick. I will do it for your sake, if not for mine!

The Mangy Cat is rising off of the pavement!

The eyes are no-longer always glossed over!

Chapter 38; Importance #46; 3

Living in W van 1 year, and tent 2

years- my own Walden Experiment

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" – H. D. Thoreau

"Why do you live in a tent, E?" asked Naji, earnestly.

"I don't know. It's hard to explain. It's like when people ask me 'why are you vegetarian?' I now just say, 'because of every reason you have ever heard: spiritual, health, animal rights, environmental reasons et cetera'. So I live in the tent for all the reasons one might expect: to get away from our status quo, consumeristic, fake culture, and be ascetic and try to get closer to God and Nature and see what I can learn."

Awww, I wish I could explain it as clearly as H.D! How did H.D. put it?

The main character in "A Clockwork Orange" loved Ludwig Van Beethoven so much, that he felt enough of a certain familiarity with him to call him **Ludwig Van**, with passion and

excitement, like talking about a lost lover, or someone who he worships. Such is the case with Henry David Thoreau and I. He is my beloved icon and hero, **H.D.!**

Naji continued, "It's just funny to hear of an American living in a tent, when so many Indians live in poor conditions and often look up to people like Donald Trump and people like that from America- people who have good business ideas, and work hard, and make a lot of money and can then live an expensive, comfortable lifestyle."

I laughed, "Really? People in India like Donald Trump? That's funny. I look to India for spiritual insight, and Indians look to America for material insight. I guess that makes sense, in a weird way."

"I can understand what you are doing though, E. It's common for people to be hiking in the Himalayans, you know, with lots of gear and specialized equipment, and then for someone to look to the right, and see a Yogi meditating with hardly any clothes, and a large beard, and someone will give him a small bowl of rice or something and that's it! It's incr-r-r-edible how they do that. I mean, how do they do that, man?! Eh?!" His excitement and laughter was sweet and contagious.

"Yeah, that's a lot more difficult than what I'm doing."

"But what you are doing is similar. It's like, everybody else is worrying about the stock market going up or down one hundred points or something, right? Everybody is always worried about housing prices going up too fast one day, or down too fast another day, but it doesn't bother you or matter to you, r-r-right? You are fine. You survive either way, and are separated from all that. Most Americans, if they push an elevator button they don't know what to do if it doesn't work, or if their cell phone breaks or is out of batteries, they freak out because their whole life is wrapped up in all of that."

"Yeah, totally!" I laughed, picturing someone staring blankly and stupidly at an elevator button which refused to light

up, while also trying to be careful not to accidentally start entering self-hypnosis through that elevator.

“R-r-ight?! Yeah! It’s like, some people don’t even step on grass for an entire week. They just wake up from their climate-controlled houses, get in their vehicle parked in their garage, and drive to their work, park their car in a concrete garage, and step into carpet and concrete and steel, and never have to ever leave a car or building that is ever anything but seventy two degrees Fahrenheit!

People have controlled their environment, they have replaced it all with concrete and steel and plastic. People just work to pay for their lifestyle, and then drink to forget it, and then spend the rest of the time entertaining themselves on their phones and computers in order to distract themselves from reality and their own emptiness. But you jumped straight into the emptiness and dirty, uncomfortable world that everyone else is neurotically and desperately trying to ignore!”

I liked Naji.

“Why do you live in a tent, E?” asked Sunny.

“I don’t know. I guess I’m just really sick of our society and its disconnection to Nature. I think if we lived more in harmony with it and *in* it more, then we wouldn’t have to always feel like we need to fight it or always phrase things improperly, like ‘jobs over owls’ or ‘the economy is more important than the environment’. This separation is imaginary, and self-made, and harmful, and totally unnecessary and it pisses me off, but it feels like I’m the only one who sees that sometimes.”

“I think it is a great idea. I think you are able to draw closer to the mana of the land and the positive, powerful, good life-force power of the land and good energy or ‘God’ contained within. In Reiki, the lifeforce is a very important concept, and intentionally putting yourself within the lifeforce is central to Reiki. Intentionality is very important in Reiki.”

“Yeah, I mean, for me, it is difficult, because half of me is a skeptical scientist, so I think that sorta gives me doubt and I don’t notice anything different at all while living in a tent, than in an apartment. It could also be because my mind is sometimes distracted by the many details which are necessary to think about, or thrust themselves on me, like needing to get out of the tent in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, or waking up to the feeling of spiders and bugs crawling over me, or remembering to grab water and carry it et cetera...

But other times, I *do* feel something powerful, and yet subtle, and I guess feminine. The wind rustles the trees and brings fresh air. The birds chirp around me, and bugs. There is a creek nearby. I hear all these natural things that humans evolved to be around and I feel happy. They all become my friends. I sense their presence and feel their dignity of life and a kind of pulsing, loving, vibrant energy. The peace I felt as a kid, laying down on my back on my sleeping bag, and looking up at my orange tent, completely relaxed after a long backpacking hike... is still there! I love that!

I don’t think I can do it forever, because my tent is starting to get moldy no matter how many times I pack it onto my backpack and schlep it to be washed. The mold is giving me a constantly sore throat. But overall, for this period of my life, it has helped with my psychological environmental depression by being closer to the ‘aina. By healing the physical rift between the Earth and myself, it is healing the crying lambs in my head. The relaxing moments in nature are also grounding me and are helping me de-stress and help my headache, I think. By the way, I recently heard that the American Psychological Association officially acknowledged that some people have depression caused by concern for the environment, so that makes me feel a bit less crazy since other people must be feeling the same way that I am right now, and I’m not alone.”

Chapter 39; Importance #10; MS

Silencing the Lambs in my Head, Part 1,-

building solar-electric car while cursing G.W. Bush

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd7e1fXYluM>

"I heard a strange noise", Clarice said, voice faltering.

"What was it?" Lecter pressed.

"It was... screaming...some kind of screaming like a child's voice."

"What did you do?"

"I went... downstairs...outside...I crept up into the barn. I was so scared to look inside, but I **had** to" she said, recalling the fear and horror.

"What did you see Clarice? What did you see?"

Hannibal Lecter relished this story.

"Lambs. They were screaming."

"They were slaughtering these spring lambs?"

"They were screaming!" she said in a whisper, fighting back tears.

"And you ran away?"

“No. First I tried to free them. I...I opened the gate to their pen, but they wouldn't run, they just stayed there. Confused. They wouldn't run.”

“But you could, and you did, didn't you?”

“Yes. I took one lamb and I ran as fast as I could.”

“Where were you going, Clarice?”

“I don't know. I didn't have any food...any water, and it was very cold...**very** cold. I thought... I thought if I could just save one, but...he was so heavy...so heavy. I didn't get more than a few miles- then the sheriff's car picked me up. The rancher was so angry, he sent me to live with the Lutheran Orphanage, 'n Bozeman. I never saw a ranch again.”

“What became of your lamb, Clarice?”

“They killed her.”

“You still wake up sometimes don't you? Wake up in the dark?” Anthony Hopkins delivers the lines in an unforgettably sonorous, and ominous, creepy, yet intelligent and clear manner. “and hear the screaming of the lambs?”

“Yes.”

“And you think if you save poor Katherine, you can make them stop, don't you? You think if Katherine lives, you won't wake up in the dark ever again, to that awful screaming of the lambs?”

“I don't know. I don't know.”

“Thank you Clarice. Thank you.”

Some literary critics look down on the mystery genre, but I think this scene in *The Silence of the Lambs* movie, based on the book by Thomas Harris, and played perfectly by Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster is one of the gems of all artistry of the 20th century. I hope that scene doesn't fade into history, as if it was an insignificant fad.

Maybe it was, but for whatever reason, it hit me really hard. Was it because I, also, am horrified by the way humans treat animals? Was it because I know animals to scream with

just as much human-like dignity and intensity as humans do, and the sounds they make really do sound human, with every bit of emotion and real desperation? Perhaps. But I think it hit me, mostly, because I could immediately relate to the movie and book, because I had lambs screaming in my head, waking me up in the night since I was seven years old, except the lambs were birds, covered in oil, crying to be heard, crying to be saved, crying to be killed, crying at the injustice of the world, crying to be avenged.

Whether or not the essence of that movie goes away in time, psychologists have found similar evidence, that people often are motivated to right the extreme wrongs they see and experience in the world, and that by trying to correct and help the pain of others, it helps them heal the same pain that they carry. Researchers have found that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) continues to exist in patients when emotional processing of the event continues to be avoided by the patient with various coping mechanisms. Instead, you must face your fears and pain.

Call it just a silly fiction movie, but it holds the key for humans to end their own suffering. We must face our darkest selves and our darkest memories. We must do everything we can to silence the lambs in our heads!

I am on my friend's organic farm on the North Shore which he saved as farmland when Dole left Hawai'i after its iconic influence and moved to less-expensive land. The red soil seemed tired. The sun beats mercilessly with no trees- no reposeful shade.

"Fuck!" I looked at a chunk of flesh on my knuckles, newly pealed back, and starting to bleed, and put it to my mouth.

I tried unscrewing another bolt on my rusty, 1999 Mazda 626 which I was trying to convert into a solar-electric car. My hand slipped and further injured my knuckles.

“Goddammit! Fucking George W. Bush asshole fucker killer of women and children fucking fuckface! I hate you! I will build this fucking car! You can’t stop me, fucker!”

I took a break, and grabbed my seventh Coke and sat on the small porch next to the shipping crate that my friend hand-built his house around.

My friend also took a break from planting and tilling the stubborn land, and ate some healthy collard greens, one of the few things which seemed to be able to grow without problems there.

“An environmentalist who lives off Cokes?” he joked.

“Yeah, it’s a weakness I have. When I get in the zone, working on the car, I don’t feel like eating- just getting quick, cold energy so I can keep going. It’s like I’m possessed.”

“It sounded like you were getting angry over there. I don’t ever see you get angry.”

I paused.

“Yes.... I wish I could say I am only making an electric car because of my love of the environment. I wish I could say I have purely unselfish motivations to make the world a better place, and pollute less...but...that would only be partly true. George Bush and all the oil barons and people getting rich killing people, the Halliburton’s, the Dick Cheney’s, all of them, get me so pissed I need to let it out. I get so mad and depressed thinking about all the fucked up things in this world, I have to let it out or I’ll go crazy!

I wish I was all pure and innocent, and, like Mother Teresa. I wish I was Luke Skywalker or Yoda, drawing strength from the *Good* side of The Force. I wish I was Jesus, always connected to the Good God, living in perfect communion with Him, always in prayer, and meditating on him... but I’m not... I’m a young Darth Vader... I draw power from my **anger**. I’m making this electric car with **anger**, not peace and love. I don’t often show it, but I actually have a lot of anger.

There's a burning fire of pain within me, man. I carry with me, my own screaming lambs. I can't just be like everyone else and let the asshole fuckers in this world fuck everything up, and just stand by and watch it happen. I can't just keep filling my tank with gas, adding to the problems. I can't put more pollution in the air with every light switch I turn on anymore. I have to *do* something. I don't know what, and I don't care... just *something*. So the only thing I can think of now is to build this electric car, even though it seems like a stupid, impossible task for one person to do all by himself in the middle of nowhere. I have to do it to try to silence the lambs in my head, or I'll go nuts! I have to try!"

I slammed my empty Coke can down, and walked away.

I decided. *Enough with that fucking rusted bolt. I'm gonna take the Sawzall and just saw through the fucking one-inch steel. Anything which gets in my way will be ripped up and destroyed. No more mister nice guy- stupid goddamn mother fuckers! Now I **want** something to stand in my way, just so that I have an excuse to get out the Sawzall and slice and rip those fuckers in half! Yippy-kai-ae! die mother fuckers!*

My eyes burned as if I had been underwater for an hour in the ocean.

It will probably take me over ten minutes to cut through an inch of steel. I bet it would take less than a minute to cut through the watery, weak, flesh of a human neck.

Chapter 40: Importance #32; M.S

Silencing the Lambs in my Head Part

2, Relaxing while building on a vision,

Restoring Eden

I later learned that psychologists and philosophers like Ken Wilber think that depression is caused from repressed anger. Building the electric car helped me express my anger over the injustices of the world in a mostly-healthy manner. The oil-drenched sea birds were still in my head. I still had lambs bleating. I still burned.

However, the mornings after my mad rantings and yelling and cussing and destroying and fixing were some of the most peaceful. I would wake up in my tent very late- late enough for the temperature to get high enough to cause me to wake up in sweat- late enough for the orange and green light coming through my nylon tent to reach her arms of light beams into my eyelids and pull them open.

I would just lay there, breathing hard but relaxed from the heat and humidity of Hawai'i, and then, instead of unconsciously reaching for an electric alarm clock or cell phone, I would find my water bottle, just as I left it and drink a refreshing drink, thankful that I didn't drink it all the night before.

I would unzip my tent and get out- out of the sauna as fast as I could and stretch my mostly-naked body in the comparatively cool wind. I felt somewhat fulfilled, like a person who has smoked a cigarette after quitting for a week, or getting a drink after being sober for a month, or like a serial murderer who had a successful, satisfying night, and wasn't yet in prison. I felt satisfied, but knew it was only somewhat satisfying, like eating candy to substitute a meal. I needed more. I still burned and suffered deep down.

The headache was still, as always, the first thing I noticed when I awoke.

When my good friend told my friends and me that his dad committed suicide we didn't know what to do. We decided to all meet at my other friend's house nearby and go into the woods. We silently walked into the woods somberly.

We found an old, rusted, abandoned car. First we were happy and excited to see it, and pulled all the blackberry vines off of it.

Then, we started trying to beat the shit out of it. We kicked it and hit it with our fists until our fists bled.

Then we got mad at it because it refused to break as easily as they do in the movies. The glass was surprisingly resistant and strong.

We eventually found a large, 4"-wide chain with a huge metal hook at the end and whipped that heavy metal thing onto the front windshield while standing on the hood and we all cheered when a powerful stroke made our first crack. We cheered as if we had succeeded in bringing back his dad.

But we hadn't.

So we hit it harder... and harder.... and harder.

We took turns standing on the hood of the old car, beating the shit out of the windshield with a heavy, old, chain. We beat it like a piñata.

Eventually, with the glass caved-in with cracks spread everywhere like a spider web, we all stood on the car and kicked and kicked on the windshield until it fell in the car and we cheered.

But then we sat down and looked at the cracked, messed up windshield and realized that the windshield didn't bring back the dad. The broken, and cracked shards only reminded us that our hearts were just as broken and shattered, and couldn't be fixed.

We laid back against the car and cried.

Then, we left as silently as we came, patting the car gently, as if to comfort it.

Now, back in Hawai'i, I reflect on that experience and my experience with my electric car, and think, *beating the shit out of cars can't be my only coping mechanism. What else can I do? ... I think I will start a chapter of the Christian Environmental club here at UH, Restoring Eden, which I joined and led at Western Washington University. I enjoyed getting atheist environmentalists and evangelical Christians together to plant trees and help restore native habitats near streams to help the native, struggling salmon.*

I put up signs around campus which read, "Check out Restoring Eden, a Christian Environmental club- vegan potluck!"

We gathered and read Leviticus 25:23, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants."

"What do you all think about that?" I asked the three or four people who came.

"I think it means that the land belongs to God, which makes sense, since God created everything, so we shouldn't act like it is ours, even if we buy it. We should treat all the land as if it is God's, not ours, so, with more respect than we do now.", said Francine. I was surprised and glad that she came.

“Yeah, I mean, look at how we trash the environment and pollute it and kill what lives here. We act like we have a right to trash it, but we can’t! It’s not ours!” said another Christian Environmentalist, a rare breed of people that I had identified myself with.

“I agree,” I said, “It really hits me hard that the Bible actually says that we are but *aliens* and *tenants* in this land. We are only renting this Earth that we are given, and we need to respect our Landlord better! We are deadbeat renters! In other meetings we will read about the story of Noah’s ark from the point of view of a Christian Environmentalist, but you can kind of see where we are going with it now... What do people do with shitty, deadbeat renters?”

“They get evicted”

“Yes! That is what happened with the flood. God evicted us for being shitty renters, *aliens* on His land. He cared so much about all the animals, that he wanted to make sure they were all saved, but I wonder if he thought twice about whether or not to save us, since we already proved to be deadbeat renters of his land.”

“Now lets read the entire chapter of Leviticus 26”, I say. We do so, and then some of the members say, “I don’t get it.”

“Lets reread this part starting at Leviticus 26:34:

³⁴Then the land shall enjoy its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its sabbath years. ³⁵As long as it lies desolate, it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it.’

I continued, “So I think what it is saying is that if we don’t keep God’s commandments, *including the commandments to give rest to the land- the Sabbath- essentially... to take care of the Earth*, then all these bad things will happen. The land will become so desolate and lacking in food that we will even eat our own children!”

“What!? No- the Bible did *not* just say we would eat our own children if we don’t take care of the land!”

“Yes, it did” I said, somberly “Look back at verse 29, ‘You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.’. It’s actually repeated in other areas... let me see... hmm... yes Deuteronomy 28:53-57 says this:

⁵³Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the Lord your God has given you. ⁵⁴Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, ⁵⁵and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. ⁵⁶The most gentle and sensitive woman among you—so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot—will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter ⁵⁷the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities.’

So not only will people eat their own children, they will refuse to share the meat with others, and a mother will begrudge her own placenta and child –afterbirth- after she gives birth and plans to eat them as well.”

“That’s disgusting...not exactly something I heard in Sunday school.”

“Yes” I said, relishing the disgusting predictions of the Bible explaining what will happen to those who disobey the commandments. “But it makes total sense. God says that we are just tenants and aliens of the land and that we need to follow his commandments in order to be prosperous and fruitful. One of those very important commandments is to let the land lay fallow and go wild for one year out of every seven years, and to give the land its own Sabbath, thereby taking care of it. But if people get

greedy, and work the land too hard, it will naturally become desolate land. We know this is true of today. Just think about what happened in the Dust Bowl.

I like that the Bible basically says that the land itself *will* get its Sabbath, its rest, its due-respect. We can either be good tenants of his land and give the land respect and its Sabbath as God commands, or we can skip that and be greedy, and then create such a wasteland that we eat each other, including our own children and placenta until we are all dead. Once we are all dead, *then* the land will get its Sabbath and rest from us because we will be gone. Either way, the land gets its Sabbath. We have to choose. Do we treat the land right and live as good tenants, and give its Sabbath, or do we all die and give it a long Sabbath after we are gone. Either way, the... land... gets... its...Sabbath!"

I looked at the faces of my new friends and Francine, and realized I was not alone in my pain. I looked at my scabs on my knuckles. I remembered beating up the car after my friend's dad committed suicide. *I'm not alone. There are other people who suffer. There are other people who understand me and share my pain. These people share my pain. And maybe...given the exaggeratedly poignant language of this passage... maybe even God himself feels the same righteous anger about what is being done to His planet... maybe even to a much greater extent...in society's eyes I am weird to have such pain and passion... but I'm not crazy... at least... no more crazy than God.*

I saw an image of a woman going through childbirth, cursing its existence, giving it the name of "It" and finally giving birth in a tent in the setting of a 1000 BC Middle Eastern desert with blood and the placenta and blood and the umbilical cord and blood and a wriggling, crying baby and blood, blood, blood everywhere. She had snuck out to an abandoned tent so that she could feast on the baby and placenta by herself, and lick up all the blood off the floor.

She looks up at me, "We should have followed God's commandments! We should have given the land its Sabbath!"

she hissed through blood-stained, bright red teeth, blood dripping from her lips and chin, eyes like a feral, desperate hyena.

Chapter 41; Importance #31; S

*Found love, just as a crazy prophetic
single homeless man predicted*

“Hey, how’s it going, man?” I asked a homeless man after midnight in the middle of UH campus.

“Ahhh not good, not good. I’m sad because I’ll never have a wife. I’m lonely.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean. I haven’t dated anyone in eight years. I have a hard time meeting people who can understand me.” I replied.

“Oh really?” he said suddenly and with bright eyes. He perked up. “Why is it hard for people to understand you?”

“Because I am a Christian Environmentalist, and that is really rare. Many Christians I meet don’t care about the environment as much as me, and many environmentalists I meet aren’t Christian.” I said.

“Oh! I see! I see! Well you are in luck, my friend, because I have this weird gift, more of a curse really. For some reason, I can always predict when someone will fall in love and help them, but I can’t predict when I will fall in love and so it’s like I’m doomed to forever be single. But I still enjoy helping others be

happy. That's what makes me happy instead of my own happiness- seeing others get happy by helping them find their true love. I'm always right too."

"Hmm, that's interesting. Ok, how about me?"

He thought really hard and closed his eyes and seemed to be listening to something outside for a few awkward minutes. Finally, he snapped his fingers and opened his eyes and said, "Ah hah! I got it! I see! I see! You are lucky my friend. Here is what will happen to you. Here is how you will find your true love. Are you ready?"

"Okay"

"First you will find someone who will really like you and you will really like her, but don't date her, because she is just tricking you. She isn't as she seems and she doesn't share as much in common with you as you think. You will then find a second woman who you will really really like and really want to be with and think is perfect, but she doesn't like you back. Lastly, the third one's a charm. You will find someone who likes you *and* who shares your love of God and the environment. That third one is the one and you are going to marry her and be happy!"

Pause.

"Hmm. Ok thanks man." I tried to think who could be woman number 1, 2, or 3, and if I had met any of them yet.

As it turns out, shortly after that, I began hanging out with a beautiful hippy girl I had met at some Open Mics and we almost dated, but she didn't seem to have the same spiritual interests as me, and wasn't Christian at all, so I figured she was woman #1, and didn't date her, though it was a very tempting idea.

Next, I pursued someone in the Ka Wai Ola group who seemed perfect: beautiful, loving, smart, and full of compassion for the 'aina and Christianity. She was Hawaiian. After a long time, however, it was clear she didn't see me more than a friend, and she said so after I eventually asked her point-blank.

That basically left no potential candidates for a while. I really liked Sunny in many ways, and I knew it was common for people to develop feelings for their healers, but she also, didn't quite feel the same way.

Eventually, I had heard that Francine liked me. We started hanging out more and more at Restoring Eden and Open Mics and Full Moon Gatherings and protests. I didn't like her in that way at all at first... but eventually I thought, *maybe she is the third woman- the one who will 'really, really like' me, and share my passions for the Earth and God.*

Francine developed into a great friend, and eventually, I decided to give her a chance at being a great girlfriend as well. She joined me in the woods and I decided that if she could handle living with me in a tent in the woods for a few months, then maybe, just maybe, that crazy homeless guy might be right after all, and I would eventually marry the Third Woman, Francine!

Our love blossomed, and as it grew, my anxiety and depression over the Earth decreased, because I finally felt like I had a partner in crime... someone willing to skirt the usual American lifestyle... someone who understood me and wouldn't judge me... someone to share the load and pain... someone to cry with over lost pets and lost habitat... and then hug afterward. I had become an expert at crying alone, but had forgotten how comforting it is to hug someone afterward.

As we hugged, I imagined a dark, black arrow of pain surging downwards, and then a bright, white, and red source of love in the form of a rising heart symbol moving upwards, and the love was stronger and overcame some of the dark. The dark budged and lost ground. Over the course of a few more months, my original headache had decreased by another 2% thanks to community- thanks to love.

Chapter 42; Importance #33; M.S

*Silencing the Lambs in my Head Part 3, Protesting
white people infringing on native Hawaiian rights-
dealing with my ^{vs} world problem of White Guilt*

“We do not value!” chanted a Hawaiian protestor with a crown of leaves, and red clothes.

“We do not value!” we, a crowd of over fifty protestors repeated.

“A'ole makou a'e minamina!” he led

“A'ole makou a'e minamina!” we replied

“The government’s sums of money!”

“The government’s sums of money!”

“I ka pu'ukala a ke aupuni!”

“I ka pu'ukala a ke aupuni!”

“We are satisfied with the stones!”

“We are satisfied with the stones!”

“Ua lawa makou i ka pohaku!”

“Ua lawa makou i ka pohaku!”

“Astonishing food of the land!”

“Astonishing food of the land!”

“I ka 'ai kamaha'o o ka 'aina!”

“I ka 'ai kamaha'o o ka 'aina!”

“We back Lili'u-lani!”

“We back Lili'u-lani!”
“Mahope makou o Lili'u-lani!”
“Mahope makou o Lili'u-lani!”
“Who has won the rights of the land!”
“Who has won the rights of the land!”
“A loa'a e ka pono a ka 'aina!”
“A loa'a e ka pono a ka 'aina!”
“(She will be crowned again!)”
“(She will be crowned again!)”
“(A kau hou 'ia e ke kalaunu!)”
“(A kau hou 'ia e ke kalaunu!)”
“Tell the story!”
“Tell the story!”
“Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana!”
“Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana!”
“Of the people who love their land!”
“Of the people who love their land!”
“Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'aina!”
“Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'aina!”

We marched through downtown Honolulu and ended at the state capitol.

Our chants fell on deaf ears. We yelled with all our might and waved and pounded spears and leaves and let the state government know that many people in Hawai'i agreed with the international law and courts which recognized the people of Hawai'i to own its own land, and recognized the American capture of it as illegal.

“Tell the story!”
“Tell the story!”
“Of the people who love their land!”
“Of the people who love their land!”
“Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana!”
“Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana!”
“Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'aina!”
“Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'aina!”

We were filled with passion, expecting that we will eventually triumph, and the Hawaiian Kingdom would return. But the chants echoed off of the odd volcano-inspired architecture, and the only people who responded to us were our own echoes.

We eventually stopped and got onto cars and buses made by white people, and went to our houses, designed by white people, and watched Netflix videos, made by white people, and went to sleep, dreaming of a past kingdom, which will never return.

Chapter 43; Importance #30; M.S

It will take 10 sessions of Reiki"

After my third Reiki session with Sunny, she said, "I think it will take about ten sessions of Reiki"

We travelled to parks and did Reiki. We travelled to sacred Hawaiian temples, heiaus. We did Reiki on couches. We did Reiki often, and sure enough, after about ten sessions, (as I'll describe in the epilogue) my headache finally did leave me!

Why didn't we just do all ten in a row? Well, logistically, it would be difficult, but also, I think one of the main lessons I learned with Reiki (whether it really did help or not), is that sometimes healing takes time. I learned I had to be patient with my recovery and take joy and comfort in the very small, barely perceptible improvements that I felt month by month.

You have to learn to love the grind and love the process.

This is difficult because in modern American culture, we demand a quick fix to everything, even things which took a lifetime to accumulate, like a headache, or the mix of DNA defects which turns a benign tumor into malignant cancer.

After my headache was gone, everyone wants to know a ten-second, two-sentence soundbite as to how it was healed, and

I'm usually left speechless, saying, "I don't know... first I took care of basic physical needs like food, water, sleep, and then had to heal my psyche and it took a long time...there wasn't one thing, but a lot of small things which helped."

Therefore, I don't know if it was the "It will take ten sessions of Reiki" which actually healed me, or if it was the powerful placebo effect during those sessions which helped heal me, or whether, like having Francine, the healing came, in part, because I had a friend who cared enough to be with me and touch me and show care and concern and love for me.

Sunny tells me that Reiki is just like when a child runs to a mother and asks the mother to kiss an "owie". The mother bends down, takes her own child's hand into her warm hand, and kisses the child's hand, and the child literally feels better, stops crying, and runs back to play outside, fully ignoring the scraped hand.

Perhaps, just as such a loving gesture convinces a child that they are healed, so too, having a mentality of "it will take ten sessions of Reiki" convinced my psyche to allow myself to be healed in time. The phrase itself, may have just as much power as any action.

I had to develop a long-term view. I had to stop frenetically worrying, thinking things like, "Ahhhh! I can't stand my headache anymore! I need to heal it today!"

I instead, became friends with it, and called it my Bunion in my Brain.

It will take ten sessions of Reiki.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride. Enjoy the process of healing. It is a special process which can't be rushed.

It will take ten sessions of Reiki.

Chapter 44; Importance #9; M.S

Circular mandalas- meditating on

Wholeness

“So I see you visited the dietitian. How did that go?” asked a UH campus medical doctor. Was that a slight rueful smile at the corner of her mouth? Is she imagining the clashes between us? Had the large dietitian talked to her about me?

“Oh, great. She made some good points, and I shaved off my dreads and am eating more and not as strictly vegan and I’m feeling better.”

“Good! I’m glad!”

“But my headache is still basically just as bad...”

“Hmmm. Well, as far as I can tell from your chart and from what you’ve told me, we have exhausted all major avenues and can’t really offer much of anything else.” She said.

I just stared blankly, and sad that there really was no official cure, and no quick fix.

“There *is* something I’d highly recommend doing though, which may help.”

“Yes? What’s that?” I ask.

“Meditate on circular things.”

“Circular things?” I ask.

“Yes. The shape of a circle has recently been found in psychological studies to help induce an overall feeling of wellbeing and wholeness. Find any circles you can. I like to find old rose windows in Catholic churches. But you could also find any small circular thing which you can hold, or look into mandalas from other cultures. Whatever it is, look at it, stare at it, and meditate on it. Don’t think of anything else. Just let your thoughts pass and focus on the circle. Focus on the wholeness.”

“Hmm ok... thanks. I like to meditate. Sure! I’ll try to meditate on circles!”

Chapter 45; Importance #45; MS

Moloka'i, Mana

I got a nice view of the small island, Moloka'i as our small plane was about to land.

I walked off the small plane, down some metal stairs, like normal. But when my foot hit the ground for the first time, something odd happened. I felt a very large and present buzz of energy and vibration on my foot, and even heard a kind of RINGRINGRINGRING pulsing in my ears, similar to my ever-constant headache ring, but that was more like a hiss. This new sensation was more powerful, and felt... pleasant instead of menacing.

What's going on? I know planes develop static charge as they fly through the air. Perhaps the captain or crew didn't discharge it properly after landing it.

I let go of the metal stairs, thinking that I had temporarily acted as a wire between the charge of the ground and the metal plane and stairs.

I took another step.

More tingling on the bottom of that foot too!

I took another step, now a full three feet away from the plane.

Tingle- tingle- tingle –RINGRINGRING!

What is this powerful feeling of...of... power?

Oh God! Maybe it's the *island itself!*

The mana that the Hawaiians have been telling me about is here! They even say Molokai'i really does have a special kind of mana.

I excuse myself from my church choir and Francine who were busy unloading, and getting ready to sing for world's last leper (Hansen's disease) colony.

When I had found a spot of grass and dirt and knew nobody was watching me, I dropped my stuff and bent down on my knees and bowed reverently to the land, my head moving all the way to the ground in-between my knees, like my favorite Yoga pose, Child's Pose.

What power is in this land? What is this? I am not worthy to be on such sacred land!

I kissed the dirt and said, "I love you. Thank you. Thank you for letting me be here. I know you are holy. Please accept me."

-Throb-throb-throb-ring-ring-ring-tingle-tingle-tingle-

I lay there for a few minutes, and eventually the noises and tingling went away... or did I just get used to it?

I rose starry-eyed and got ready to sing to some lepers. I soon learned that it is more politically correct to say that a person suffers from Hansen's disease, than call them lepers.

We sang and talked to people with Hansen's disease, a disease which gives such grotesquely and obvious growth of tumors on the face and hands that people have feared them for being "unclean" since Jesus' time.

The camp here in Kalaupapa was created as a quarantine to stop the fearful spread of Hansen's disease throughout Hawai'i. They didn't receive very proper treatment until one

brave priest, Father Damien came to help. He eventually lost his life to the disease, and was beatified by the Church for his service.

One old patient we met played ukulele for Adolf Hitler and said, "He was actually pretty nice to us, and was really interested in Hawaiian culture. He enjoyed our songs."

The whole thing was otherworldly.

Francine and I snorkeled and jumped out when we suddenly saw a rare, endangered Monk Seal. It was startling to suddenly get that feeling again, like someone is watching you—hair on the back of the neck prickling up, and then, turn around and actually see someone huger than a linebacker behind you, but more nimble than a ballerina. Such power mixed with grace reminds me of how awkward and weak and helpless I am in the water.

As we finished our trip, I stopped to say goodbye to the island and meditated at a small beach by myself. The waves looked magical. The wind blew my hair. The ocean sprayed a few small droplets on my skin. The sand was warm. The trees creaked in the wind. I looked down and dug my bare feet into the sand. I moved the sand to the left and right, saying goodbye to it and thanking it in my own way, and then I saw a seashell.

I looked at it and marveled at its beauty. It was about four centimeters in diameter, or a bit over an inch. It had a thickness of a centimeter. It was a little, perfectly round disk.

A mandala!

I looked at it and got lost in its spiral pattern of white and grey.

I asked the land if I could have it to help my headaches.

It seemed to say yes.

I wanted to make sure because even scientists talk about curses which come to people when seashells and objects are taken from the Hawaiian lands. Strange disasters (such as buildings burning down) happen to those who took things off the islands, to both scientists and non-scientists alike.

I took it.

It hummed.

I bent back down on the island and kissed the island
goodbye.

“Thank you.” I whispered, and left something of my own
for the island: tears.

Chapter 46; Importance #8; MS

Meditating

When I got back to my real happy place in the woods, I couldn't wait to sit by the river and meditate on my new seashell mandala.

I found a nice rock to sit on, just in case the hippies and New Agers were right about the "grounding" effects of rocks, and roots, and other things connected deep in the Earth. Besides, the rock was a nice flat place to sit without wet dew.

I crossed my legs in a comfortable fashion which also helped me sit up fairly straight and alert. I got out the seashell and caressed it, holding it in my right palm with my left palm behind my right palm, parallel to my throat.

I bent my head slightly downwards and got lost in the spiral of the seashell which had become smooth from the ocean waves. I had never seen a seashell like it, and never since.

It was like a thick wooden nickel, completely cool and smooth to the touch. It was very white all around except for the front which had a dark-grey spiral, but the spiral itself had long-been smoothed over into a flat surface.

It was so interesting to me; it was easy to meditate on because it naturally held my attention without causing me to

have lots of distracting thoughts. The attention it garnered helped me not think of any distracting thoughts about school or things to plan for the day. Yet, my attention wasn't piqued *too* much either since I didn't have too many thoughts like *how is it so smooth?*... only a few thoughts like that.

I liked this new kind of mediation.

In the past, I would close my eyes, but then my wild imagination would take over and my memory would recall images from the day and it would take a long time to calm down. Sometimes in the past, I would try walking meditation in the woods or sit in the same spot, but with my eyes open, but then I wouldn't feel as "purposeful" or "deep". I don't know... it's hard to explain.

Meditating on this mandala and others seemed like a perfect mix for me: it gave me a focus and allowed me to go deep within myself and be fully present, without the distractions of my imagination.

After about fifteen to twenty minutes, I felt pretty satisfied and relaxed. I stood up and stretched and looked down at the rushing water below.

I closed my eyes. *Wait- what was that?* I closed them again. *I can see the spiraled seashell in my mind, just like when I see the waves rushing towards me after surfing! I feel like it has made a mark on my consciousness and given me a sense of wholeness and completeness.*

I walked throughout the rest of the day happy to have a circle, a symbol of wholeness imprinted on my psyche throughout the day.

Whenever I felt stressed or confused throughout the day, I would take the circular seashell out of my pocket and hold it up and look at it.

Sometimes, while I had my large brows scrunched in confusion while trying to calculate triple integrals and complex quantum mechanical physical chemistry calculations involving electron orbital levels and how they correspond to Infrared

spectroscopy... my left hand would move on its own and touch the smooth, cool, surface laying in my pocket, and my brow relaxed, and my mouth smiled, and I could then flip back through past pages and reread them in a more receptive and serene state of mind.

Sometimes I wonder if the land and mana of Hawai'i *itself* healed me more than anything else.

Chapter 47; Importance #7; BMS

Aiming for Balance... in exercise, nutrition, work, fun, love-life

Finding balance was very important in the process of healing my headache. It was the overarching guideline, or plan of attack. I approached it, like most things, in a trial and error method.

Sometimes, I would focus solely on my health, and get a really excellent routine of meditating, stretching, sleeping well, eating well, working out my own salvation and silencing the lambs in my head by working a lot with Restoring Eden and on my car, and going to lots of Reiki sessions and Spiritual Communities... but then, my research and Ph.D. studies would inevitably start failing or running into troubles, which would produce more stress than all of the distressing techniques combined!

And so it went. Sometimes I would focus on my de-stressing strategies and relaxation too much, and then I would have to start focusing more on my work. Sometimes, I would then put in a lot of hours towards my headache remediation techniques *and* my studies, but then my sleep would suffer, and so that hurt the headache as well.

Other times, I would work well, and sleep well, but then the lambs in my head would cry louder, and I would repress my feelings for the environment, thus aggravating my headache more.

After lots of trial and error, I eventually found a good balance between sleep, work, and relaxation techniques (which included working on my electric car, Restoring Eden, Open Mics etc) and hanging out more and more with Francine, my new girlfriend, who I didn't want to lose by ignoring like I had lost all my other previous girlfriends.

Francine actually helped me a lot with time management too, even though she has ADD. Perhaps *because* of her ADD, she was very aware of the importance of prioritizing actions and estimating reasonable time frames in order to plan things accordingly.

After hanging out with me for a few months, and watching me lose sleep or miss important meetings because I enjoyed talking to lots of crazy homeless people for hours at a time, she helped me understand a concept of "time wasting", and she recommended that I decide whether or not a person can be judged as a "time waster".

It seemed like a pretty harsh judgement. She encouraged me to only spend less than ten minutes talking to someone if they were "time wasters".

I resisted this idea for a while because I preferred to just "go with the flow" and not really plan out any particular day and just live in the excitement of seeing what each new adventure could bring. This certainly *did* bring me fun adventures, but it also denied some helpful adventures and experiences as well. I later came to appreciate this as an important business term called "opportunity costs".

Essentially, an efficient business person should realize that any particular minute spent doing one thing is "costing" a "loss" of not being able to do some other thing. If a greater opportunity is worth more than whatever one is doing at any

particular moment, then one should drop what they are doing, and seek the better opportunity elsewhere.

This was hard for me to implement at first, especially since being a business man was the antithesis of my goal at the time, but I slowly realized that it could even make me a more efficient hippy, Earth-loving, headache-healer. Francine helped me realize that certain things *do* require planning. For instance, temple and church services occur at predetermined, finite times. Full Moon Gatherings only occurred on the nights of the full moon. Tests and classes and work duties occurred at regular, predictable times.

I started to see that since I was struggling to find enough time to have enough sleep, work, and relaxation techniques, that basically, any person or any activity which did not fit into any of those categories should be thought of a “time waster” and avoided and curtailed.

As Francine helped me find better balance, I realized that hanging out with friends (even crazy new homeless friends) wasn’t “bad”, but should just be compared to the relatively more important opportunity cost lost in sleep, work, and relaxation techniques.

Sometimes, talking with crazy homeless people was very therapeutic to me since I could relate to them, and they served a helpful role as a counselor. Sometimes, however, after ten minutes of talking to them, it was obvious that I wasn’t getting nearly as much enjoyment or relaxation that I could get from meditating on my seashell, for instance. So when Crazy Cat Jacques Guy, or Crazy Persian Prince Saeed Guy started going off on an-hour-long tangent about the many diseases which could infect cats, or how evil the Humane Society is for putting down animals, or how the Illuminati were planning on taking over the world, then I started to do what most normal people do, and learn how to make some excuse to walk away and stop talking to them.

I started realizing that normal people don't spend all day conversing with crazy homeless people, not because they were selfish assholes, but because it really is a waste of time.

I continued to learn that I can stop feeling guilty for being selfish. Being selfish is the most natural thing, and I continued to learn that I had to at least be selfish enough to be healthy. As long as I had a horrible headache, I decided that being selfish and taking care of myself would have to be my number one priority until I am healed. *Once I am healed, I will be able to help people more effectively. So being selfish right now is actually the most selfless thing I can do!*

Chapter 48; Importance #6; S

*Helpful reading from White Eagle. You have
invited your illness, and it is a gift for you to learn
and grow from*

Throughout my five-year-headache healing experience, I had been reading and meditating on passages from a small, green book my dad gave me once, called “The Still Voice” by White Eagle.

Each small chapter was a small meditation, which often encouraged the reader to imagine sitting in front of a healing beam of light emanating from a rose, a symbol of love, in order to draw nearer to the essence of God, the essence of all things loving and good. By focusing and meditating on such things, I found it helpful to *become* such things.

Towards the end of my five-year-headache, I read other books by White Eagle, and tried to silence the laughing scientist in me which found it all quite a silly and ridiculous New Agey bastardization of Christianity.

After all my experiences and 47 techniques for healing my headache, they all culminated in this 48th technique: reading and letting these words from White Eagle’s “Little Book of Healing Comfort” wash over me. I felt like I myself had written

the words, and they were explaining to me exactly the same lessons I had been learning.

Here are some of the most helpful passages from “White Eagle’s Little Book of Healing Comfort” and what I was thinking as I read them:

Page 68; “THE ROAD TO JOY” excerpt

“We can only assure you that what seems to you a tragedy will eventually reveal itself as a wonderful opportunity – an opportunity for you to learn, and to develop spiritual powers which will eventually remove you from all the anguish, the frustration, the hurts and disappointments of physical life...”

*Yes! My Bunion of the Brain **has** been making me a better person, forcing me to actively become healthier in general and more spiritual. It really has been a wonderful opportunity- a blessing in disguise! I am actually **thankful** for my headache!*

Page 76; “...IS HEALING FOR THE SOUL” excerpt

“We ask you to banish all thought of disability. Do not dwell upon disease: you are with God, you are part of God. You, the spirit, must raise your consciousness above the body. Banish the arguments of the reasoning, earthly mind, for it has the power to subject you to the darkness of materialism; but the Christ, the seed within your heart, has the power to raise you up out of the limitations of physical matter. The healing of the soul is far more important than that of the body...”

Yes! Like Ikaika said “I must think more with the heart”. I have been trying to get into altered states of consciousness during Open Mics, Full Moon Gatherings, surfing, chanting, meditating, and congregating with spiritual communities in order to “banish the arguments of reasoning”, and instead, think with the heart... and I think it has been helping me!

Page 78; "WALK YOUR OWN PATH IN LOVING SIMPLICITY" excerpt

"There is nothing to fear, beloved. Nothing to fear except fear. White Eagle will give you a word of caution, however, if you will receive it. Never try to carry burdens which are not yours. That will sound strange for us to tell you. But it is better to help your brother or your sister to put the burdens on his or her own back. Encourage, sympathize; but you cannot carry anyone else's burden, because cosmic law says each soul must bear its own. Work for God in harmony with God's laws. Let God strengthen you in all you do. Never let the material burdens of others crush you. If you do, you will be incapacitated for the service of the Master. It is a very subtle point, my dear ones, to learn how to walk the middle way, to give sympathy and true help but not to be pulled over into the chaos of the lower realms."

Holy shit! This was written just for me! This has been my problem the whole time! I have carried the burdens of the entire Earth on me. I have become "incapacitated for the service of the Master"! By trying to follow God and help bring about the Kingdom of God, I have become overwhelmed and sick with all the work which needs to be done. The sins of the world have hit me so deeply that they definitely have "incapacitated" me! I'm useless with this headache, and it took having the headache for me to realize it! The headache has been a gift, a teacher!

Page 83; "RELAXATION"

"Do not neglect times of relaxation. When you relax, you are giving yourselves, your bodies, the time needed to be recharged, replenished. We know that the demands of life at the present time are very strong – we are going to say also very tempting – but do remember to relax whenever you can. By 'relax' we mean just going

to God, tuning yourself into God-consciousness, and going easy. Slacken off the tension in the physical body. Go into your place of knowledge, your awareness that all is well.”

Yes! That is exactly what I have been finding... that I need to make relaxation and all my headache remediation techniques a real priority. I need to value relaxation more, even if it means I have to sometimes sacrifice work, or human relationships, or anything else! The idea of “God-consciousness” is also phrased in a similar way in the Hindu spirituality that I have been learning. The idea of “tuning” is what I have been experimenting with Reiki. This is amazing! This is exactly what I need to hear right now! This is exactly explaining why my headache has been getting healed and really encouraging me to keep doing what I am doing!

Page 85; “THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF CALM”
excerpt

“To seek the place of serenity and peace’: this is the desire of every soul. And the turbulence of the earth is to teach you the way to find serenity. This is difficult for those on earth to understand, but the soul must pass through the fires of passion until they are burnt out. The soul must pass over turbulent seas of human emotion until the emotions learn to be still at the call of the Master, Christ.”

*Yes! This reminds me of what I learned before, that “everything is perfect!” and that part of the purpose of being on this Earth is to struggle so that we can get closer to God. On a large scale, it makes sense that all of humanity also, as a whole, is struggling, exactly as it needs to, perfectly, even, so that we can come to complete utopia and perfection after earning it. If we were born into a utopia, we would be without human free will... we would be animals in a Garden of Eden. But since we have Free Will, we have to first learn how **not** to use it before we learn how to use it in the best manner to make the world perfect. We have to go through a period of struggling and trial and error, so that*

when we get to a kind of utopia, we will remember our painful lessons in order to keep the perfection. But we have to remember that even the struggling and failing is part of the perfection as well. Everything is perfect! We have to go through “turbulent seas” so that we can learn how to teach them to be still, and at one with God!

Chapter 49; Importance # 19; M

Seeking professional help of the

Mind... a psychologist

After five torturous years, my headache was finally completely gone! I walked into a psychologist's office one day and realized I should have probably gone to one long ago while I had suffered with the headache.

"Hello, I have an appointment. I'd like to see if I qualify for extended time on tests. I have had accommodations before for test anxiety." I said, thinking that I might want to be a medical doctor.

"Great! Sure, I can help with that. Fill out these forms and take this test. What you have to do is push the button every time you see a square in the top half of the screen, but not the lower half of the screen."

I took the tests and then she quickly reviewed them and said, "Well, I don't think you have test anxiety. I think you have ADD."

“What? Really? My wife, Francine, has ADD but we always joke that I have the opposite of ADD because I get too focused on things and ignore what’s going around me.”

“Yes! That actually is a sign of ADD. People with ADD can hyper-focus. Do you ever stay up late thinking about something or doing some project and forget to eat and lose track of time?” she asked with a smile.

I thought about all the times I had stayed up late in the lab doing lots of science experiments and losing track of time, and forgetting to eat. I thought about how I would work on my electric car for ten hours straight, subsisting off of nothing but Cokes.

“Yes... I do that...” I said, confused how she could know me so well.

“Don’t worry, ADD isn’t only about *trouble* with focusing, like most people think of it. It is more about having a different motivation on *what* to focus on than most people. Most people can’t get into situations of hyper-focus like you can, so in some cases, it can even be an advantage to have ADD. Some people suggest there are seven types of ADD/ADHD, and one of those types is known for having even more periods of hyper-focus than other types of ADD. The more you learn about it, the more you can decrease the affects you don’t want, and use it to leverage the beneficial affects you *do* want!” She said compassionately, happy to help, while I looked on skeptically.

“Can you give an example?” I asked.

“Sure! For instance, most people receive little doses of dopamine after the completion of a simple task, which gives the brain the feeling of reward and happiness, which keeps a person motivated on a task, even a task which they don’t really want to do. However, your brain doesn’t have that luxury, so you might procrastinate and avoid doing things you don’t want to do. When you do start a task that you don’t want to, you might take over two times longer to complete it because you don’t have that chemical motivation like most people do.

The positive side however, is that you also aren't *dependent* on dopamine to motivate you like most people, so as long as you are really, really motivated internally to do something, you can focus on it better than anyone.

So, if you are open to taking some medication, we could find a good balance of medication which could help you function more efficiently with menial tasks, but still allow you to hyper-focus on interesting, big tasks."

"Oh, I see. Cool! "I said, warming up to the idea. I also pictured myself all those many nights of studying uninteresting things or doing menial tasks, like grading, and how long it took me, compared to most people. "I've done some research on Ritalin, and heard that it basically works by decreasing the reuptake of dopamine, serotonin, and epinephrine, which has the effect of increasing the concentration of dopamine, serotonin, and epinephrine in the patient's brain, making them more focused, and happier with more energy, and able to make better decisions."

"Wow! Yes, you are right! Although, I didn't know in quite that detail. That reminds me... in order to more-fully understand the test results for ADD, it would be beneficial for me to have you take an IQ test."

I take the test with her during another appointment.

"So... you got a really good score, a high enough score to get into Mensa, if you wanted to" she says.

"Really?" I ask, confused, "I didn't think I was *that* smart. I figured I might be smarter than average in order to get a Ph.D. in chemistry, but I often feel stupid since I am slow at processing things, and I guess I just always followed the Bible literally when it said to 'consider others better than yourself'"

"Oh really? That's funny you didn't know you were smart. Oh yes, believe me, even though IQ tests have several flaws, it still can fairly confidently tell us that you have a brain

organ that works very, very well. Your ADD causes you to have a weaker 'working memory'- short-term memory basically, and it can make the recall of facts slow for some people. In fact, your ADD made you go too slowly on some sections of the test, and lowered your score, but when we find a good dosage of medication for you, then you will improve in some sections of an IQ test and have an even higher score! Don't let anyone tell you you're stupid! Everyone is smart in some manner, but you are definitely smart in many ways!

I haven't ever seen someone do so well in that section of random broad-based knowledge. How did you know that the Earth's natural harmonic frequency is 8 Hz, or the circumference of the Earth, or that the skin is the heaviest organ?"

"I don't know. I didn't think I was good at memorizing things... but sometimes, when I learn something interesting, then I remember it, I guess."

As I biked away from the doctor's office in Boulder, Colorado, my new home, it all started to make sense.

ADD causes people to make poor decisions. Suddenly a memory of me swimming to my near-death flashed before my eyes, and many other stupid decisions I had made.

ADD made me feel stupid and different, when I was actually smart. I hated school when I was younger because I was bored, but my teachers saw me as an average student since my ADD masked my intelligence. I had heard about people being "twice exceptional" and now I knew myself to be one of those people.

Some of my angst in life, including the formation of my headache probably came from the angst associated with having ADD and also some angst which comes from being gifted. I always have felt unique and different and like nobody can understand me except Francine.

I remember reading that "gifted students are not only intelligent and highly-attuned learners of math and reading, but

can also sometimes be inexplicably moved with emotion over the smallest of experiences. They have been known to cry emotionally after seeing a sunset, for instance.” Yes! That happens to me! I feel things deeply. I can experience beauty, or another person’s feelings very deeply. I can imagine things, like the Earth crying out to me.

*The problem is not that I’m just self-righteous and see that my average American lifestyle is hurting the planet with every switch of a light... The problem is that I notice these things and all the problems in the world, and care deeply about it, but most people don’t notice them...most people don’t notice the problems in the world and their implication with it? It’s not that most people just don’t care... it’s also that most people really don’t **understand** what they are doing while they live their polluting lifestyles.*

I didn’t only form a headache because of my love of the environment and guilt. It also formed because I always thought of myself as a freak who didn’t fit into society. All humans desire to be known and heard and feel part of a community. My ADD and high intelligence makes me so different and weird; makes me see the world so differently, and act so differently from most people that it is as if all other humans are connected to each other, and I’m all alone.

Left alone, I had obsessed over all the suffering which happens on the planet that most people ignore, or don’t know about. I started hating people and seeing them (including myself) as a cancer on this beautiful planet. I descended into depression, and probably a whole host of mental illnesses. I wish I had seen a professional psychologist earlier. I recommend it for all chronic headache sufferers, especially since a headache is a psychosomatic disease.

The knowledge of myself has also helped me genuinely pray, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.”

It turns out “Know Thyself” is not only a wise recommendation, but can lead to great healing as well.

Conclusion

In my mind's eye, I found myself, once again, on that dreadfully grey beach with dark-grey waves crashing. I am on the beach covered in oil. All around me are the 300,000 birds who are dying from the Exxon-Valdez oil spill.

A few people in rubber outfits, originally brightly yellow and orange, and now smeared black and slippery are trying unsuccessfully to save the birds by washing their wings with soap and rough brushes and black buckets.

I am one of those people now, and am trying desperately to clean an oil-drenched bird. It is limp in my hands and weak. The eye looks at me, lost. The black, drenched beak seems to try to say something. I listen carefully, temporarily ignoring the oil spread over the water, the rocks, the sand, the birds... everything.

"Kill me!" she whispers.

"What?! No! I want to save you"

"Kill me..." she says again.

"What?! No!"

"Kill me... you can't save me. I've been dead for decades anyway. End my suffering."

I grab a nearby knife and hold up the bird firmly by the head in the air.

I put the knife near the neck and hesitate. The bird nods.

I look away and hack through the bird's neck in a crude, slippery, back-and-forth fashion. I look for anything hopeful to focus on. I cry. I squint my eyes and wail as I sever the head.

"I'm so-o-o... sorry!"

My left hand suddenly jumps up with less weight to hold. I hear the body slap down on the ground. I look at the head slowly in horror and hold it there, not knowing what to do.

I bend into Child's Pose, crying vehemently, with a great heaving up and down of my chest.

"Whyyy???!!! Whyyyy???!!!" I cry pitifully into the wind.

I eventually look around and see that all of the volunteers have severed all the heads of the birds.

They are all dead.

What do I do?

I look at all the carcasses. All the once-beautiful beings, now wasted and black and slippery.

They are holy, like everything else. They deserve a proper burial.

I pick up a nearby shovel and bury a bird into the sand, and cover it with sand. The other volunteers follow suit.

Soon there are 300,000 little mounds of sand with 300,000 little crosses made of sticks.

I lay down and try to hug a mound.

Suddenly, all 300,000 black, oily mounds burst open with 300,000 white bird-souls.

I am transported with them up to heaven and find myself surrounded by 300,000 birds beaming with light. Everything is white, and my eyes hurt with all the intense, bright light.

A bird comes up to me and says,

"The living should not cry for the dead.

Actually, it is the dead who cry for those who are alive,

but are not fully living!
Now, go.
We don't want your tears.
We want you to live your life.
Do what you can to help the Earth.
But mostly...
be happy!"

I sit up straight and open my eyes suddenly and breathe deeply. My spine and neck are tingling and there is a slight ringing in my ears.

I look left and right and can suddenly see richer colors and hear everything perfectly clear. A mist separating myself from everyone has lifted.

There is no longer a constantly buzzing noise. People's voices are no longer muffled. Thinking is no longer a chore.

My headache is gone!

My headache is gone!

The lambs have been silenced!

I'm back! I'm alive!

For the first time in five years, I smile a genuine, and large smile. For the first time in five years, my eyes are clear, and not hazy and staring. For the first time in five years, I laugh a genuine, and hearty laugh, the kind I used to be known for, and I say, "Goodbye Bunion of the Brain. Thanks for the lessons. What a wild ride!"

Epilogue

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...” Philippians 2:12, NRSV

“My headache slowly healed over five years as I silenced the lambs in my head with various ‘works’ and coping techniques of relaxation and healing and meditation. I had to silence the birds... the dreadful, oil-covered birds from the Exxon-Valdez oil spill. Healing a chronic headache is easy; all you have to do is slay your demons and become enlightened... ok, actually that can be pretty difficult.” – E. T. Sagan

It's now been several years since the five-year headache has been healed! I sometimes can't believe that I survived. I'm sometimes filled with overpowering feelings of gratitude to live headache-free, especially when I hear of others who have not *yet* been healed, and I try to imagine living like a shell of a person for my whole life.

Living with chronic pain, isn't really living at all, but just *surviving*, and I don't wish it on anyone; not even Pat Robertson

or Donald Trump or George W. Bush. My wish is that some people can hear my story, and seek professional help and live pain-free and get their life back.

Shortly after my headache left for good, I remember feeling like some kind of super-genius. People could give me their ten-digit phone number and I could memorize it immediately without effort. I could listen to a complicated seminar on physical chemistry and make all sorts of connections to other branches of science and ask intelligent questions.

I had been operating with such extreme struggle with the headache that as soon as it was lifted, my brain felt it was on overdrive, and able to remember and comprehend anything! The world was suddenly a beautiful and wonderful place again, waiting for me to enjoy it without any of the usual “ifs”, “ands”, or “buts”.

However, my friend, the Bunion in the Brain, is always there waiting for me, ready to help me realize that I’m not taking care of myself. I really do see it as a friend, because without him, I would run myself ragged with ideas, work, lack of sleep, or pushing myself in some excessive manner.

It took all 49 techniques to heal and understand the headache. I need to continue to use all 49 to help me stop it from coming back.

Here is what I currently do to avoid letting the headache come back with a vengeance. I try to live a healthy lifestyle and diet, with a good balance of sleep, work, and relaxation techniques. If I can eat enough of my semi-vegetarian diet, and sleep eight hours, and get some fulfillment from work, and come home and kiss my wife (who yes, is still Francine!), then I can stay headache-free.

I also come home and play with my little boy, and we take enjoyment in gardening and going on walks and hikes. We occasionally participate in Unity or Unitarian Universalist

churches, and occasionally help the environment with some volunteer work, and try to live consciously within reason.

We try to buy organic and go to farmer's markets, but are very wary about getting obsessed with any particular idea or cult-like mentality which my experience showed me to be so dangerous and headache-forming.

When in doubt, we look to science and reason, but still try to live while thinking with the heart.

So I'm sort of boring now, but I'll take that over a headache any day.

If I ever get a really low amount of sleep (less than three hours), then I will get a headache, and I make it a super strong priority to get enough sleep the next few consecutive nights, and then the headache goes away.

If I ever get stressed, I pay attention to signs on my body, and listen to them, and carve out more time to relax or do what I can to resolve the stress. I can still feel my neck get tense when I think of a stressful idea or am in a stressful situation, and I try to listen to that and take it seriously and remove myself from that situation as fast as I can.

I still get canker sores and zits and notice other signals when I am stressed, and take those cues seriously to nip whatever painful thought or thing is causing me trouble immediately before it turns into another crazy five-year headache!

The headache, I've found, has made me take my health and signs from my body very seriously. Why tempt fate and risk the return of such a horrible life?... and yet... that is exactly what we all do in today's modern American life.

When I visit India, or Central or Southern America, or France, I am amazed at some wisdom their cultures have. It is common to see people in cultures such as these meet friends by a river and have a quick, but relaxed lunch on the grass with a

bottle of wine, bread, and cheese, and lots of laughter and genuine conversation.

Very rarely, about once per year, I will get a headache for over a week, and then I go into “overdrive mode” when it comes to headache healing. I cut back on my commitments and double down on sleep and eating and relaxation techniques, and call in sick to work. I meditate, exercise, play music with people, and do the other techniques listed here, and then, (*Thank God!*) the headache eventually goes away.

It is much better to live a life which prevents headaches, than to get in a situation where headaches are a norm.

What else has happened since the ending of the headache? I got my Ph.D. in chemistry and did some fuel cell and solar cell research for a while. I married Francine and moved to Colorado and have a beautiful boy. I gave my seashell mandala to a Christian Evangelical friend of mine in Ka Wai Ola who suffers from chronic migraines. I gave it to him out of love, to help him, and also so that I wouldn't be the one to remove it from the sacred Hawaiian Islands.

I take Ritalin, and occasionally see a nutritionist and psychologist, and I think everyone would probably benefit from seeing a psychologist and nutritionist regularly.

I joined Mensa, and that, along with the Ritalin dosage has helped me feel more normal. Well, not that I am normal, but more like: I meet other weird people, and become friends with them, and no longer feel alone. Francine helps me with this immensely as well.

I occasionally self-hypnotize and relax and say “hi” to Big Bird, and Aslan, the Lion, and the German healer with the big healing crystal in my head. Oh yeah, and that weird monkey bell-boy is always there, that goofball!

My wife and I occasionally read from White Eagle while we fall asleep at night, and I have given a few copies of “White Eagle’s Little Book of Healing Comfort” to friends who suffer from diseases which have a potentially psychological connection, and who are open to that sort of text.

I *did* finish my electric car. I put solar panels on the entire hood, but it was only enough to charge about ten miles worth of driving per month. The lead batteries took up the entire trunk and had a 60-mile range. However, I bought a controller, a key part, from a Chinese company for \$1000 instead of \$2000 from a high-quality company, and the guy on the phone told me in broken English a wrong way to wire it incorrectly, and I followed his advice, even though I knew better from my knowledge of physics and electronics, and it short-circuited, and I didn’t have the money to fix it, so left it in Hawai’i. But it *did* work before that. I felt like it helped me “work out my own salvation” and silenced the lambs to a certain extent, even though it ended up being sort of a waste of time (every other weekend for two years) other than that. I’d like to save up money and buy a Tesla instead, now.

Shortly before I left, the Ono Pono organic food truck went bankrupt, and the Full Moon Gatherings and Open Mics stopped being organized and people moved and the whole hippy scene that I knew and loved completely dissipated.

Many of my crazy homeless friends went in and out of incarceration and mental hospitals after I left.

On December 22nd – 26th, my hippy friends who were obsessed with the Mayan apocalypse of 2012 went into hiding for a few days, but then came out, and claimed that the apocalypse did, indeed, happen, but not in the way they thought. Instead, culture will continue to accelerate and change and improve in ways we don’t even know.

My palm-reading astrologer friend was accused of rape and went into hiding.

A lot of weird stuff happened as I left the beautiful, healing islands of Hawai'i, and made me wonder about the authority on which my crazy friends spoke, and made me wonder how I could have learned anything from them at all, but still glad that I did. They were all time wasters, but I'm glad I wasted my time with them.

I truly hope some of my experiences can be helpful to people. Since recovering from depression and paranoia and headaches, I meet lots of hippy and New Agey-type people who get so bent out of shape with the state of the world and vaccines, and amber necklaces that it gets me a little mad! In some way, now I've become the fat anti-hippy nutritionist, or the Redneck Guy in the Child-Molester Van yelling at my friends to "Stop getting sucked into anti-science cult-like thinking, guilt-based thinking, and take care of yourself, damnit!"

Some people might not think my experiences can help someone who might be the opposite of me. Let's do a thought experiment. Let's imagine someone opposite to me... perhaps an uneducated redneck businessman who owns a pit bull fighting ring and dumps toxic waste somewhere in Idaho for money. Such a person does not lose sleep or get headaches from environmental worries or social justice... yet he still might live with just as terrible a headache every day. Why?

Instead of battling demons of oil-dripped birds, he might lose sleep over ideas that his friends tell him, like "This liberal president is trying to take all our guns" or other such ideas. He then gets really worked up about it, and puts lots of bumper stickers on his truck about it, but it still puts him in a bad mood, and so he gets more and more mad talking about it

with his friends, and yells at relatives who think differently when they visit on Thanksgiving.

Based on who he associates himself with, he gets his mind wrapped up in all sorts of doom and gloom scenarios and worries about lots of things which seem silly to an average American, like “Mexicans are taking all our jobs”, but to him, it is just as real as my worries about the environment.

Could my story even help him, an opposite of me? Yes, actually. Because most of what I learned boils down to “Take care of yourself physically, seek professional help, and try these relaxation techniques”.

Would a Redneck-me benefit from taking care of his nutrition and sleeping and drinking habits? Yes. Would a Redneck-me benefit from seeking professional medical, nutritional, and psychological help? Yes. The psychologist, especially, might be able to help him see how silly his fears are, in time. Would a Redneck-me benefit from meditation? Sure, if he actually tried it. Would a Redneck-me benefit from getting a massage, joining several spiritual support groups, Reiki, aromatherapy, losing himself in music or other hobbies, listening to advice from honest people, learning how to relax and take care of his body and notice when his body is telling him he is stressed? Would he benefit from surfing or scheduling more relaxing activities (maybe hunting)? Yes, I think so, if he was driven to be in so much pain that he was willing to try anything, like I was.

So while I am not claiming to have figured out any magic formula that everyone should try, I still have a feeling that many of the lessons I learned can be universal lessons that can help people find their own path of healing.

Wanting to be healed is the first step. Deep down, I think after I got used to having the headache, I wanted to stay sick, as silly as that sounds, even though I would have denied it

at the time. The headache, like the suffering of the environment, became part of my ego, part of my identity, and the ego will stop at nothing, even death, to keep its own fake, illusionary existence alive.

I have a sneaking suspicion that all identities that we clasp onto dearly are not real, and can do more damage than good.

A manager takes pride in the identity of “being a good manager” and then stops listening to feedback and becomes a bad manager.

A woman has an identity of “being thinner than average” and then becomes anorexic.

A high school student identifies as being “popular” and “cool” but then graduates and is alone and feels like a loser, and completely loses identity.

We want to believe that we are a such-and-such person born on such-and-such date and lived in such-and-such place, and are of a such-and-such race and religion and votes according to such-and-such party, and likes such-and-such food, and enjoys such-and-such activities and works a job as a such-and-such... but we’re not! Those are just stories our ego tells us in order to keep itself alive.

The true reality may be existential and like this: we are a collection of atoms made of stardust which organizes itself according to very intelligent designs from DNA (which evolved randomly), and we interact with our surroundings and move atoms into us and away from us according to the plans of the DNA, which simply exists to exist and replicate further copies of itself. We are no more special than any other lifeform but certain life events make impressions on us and alter us and make us feel special and unique and separate from all other beings, but we are not. We are all a dancing collection of atoms moving to and fro. We may or may not have a spirit which may

or may not be connected to a God, which may or may not exist. We can hope. That is allowed.

But let's not delude ourselves, and let ourselves think we are anything more than that. If we do, any delusion, any truth which is taken to an extreme and *fixated* on **may** become a headache.

I could have fixated on the truth of environmental destruction just as easily as I could have fixated on the truth that I am part Irish, and love to drink alcohol, making me an alcoholic and disrupting my life to the point of a chronic headache. I could have also fixated on being part German and worked myself so hard as to live with a chronic headache. I could have fixated on the truth that I, at one time, lived in the Midwest and could have joined the culture of eating lots of meat and casserole and watching lots of TV and football to the point of becoming severely obese to the point that it led to depression and headaches.

Every day I meet people who fixate on certain truths related to their identities, and take it to such an extreme that it is unhealthy. I have a sneaking suspicion that there are no sacred cows. There is no holy land, and at the same time, everything is holy, equally. You are very special, and so is everything else, so you are really not that special. The entire galaxy could collapse into a black hole and no other intelligent lifeform in the universe would know the difference.

Everything is a beautiful cosmic dance in the universe, and we can all be grateful for being part of it. None of us is outside of it though, so get over yourself, and you might just have a chance at being humble enough to see what it is you need to do to heal your headache.

You essentially have to become enlightened in order to heal a chronic headache. It is a tall order.

But if all else fails, at least remember the wise advice of the only redneck in Hawai'i driving a creepy all-white, beat-up, windowless van,

“Fuck! Fuckin’ asshole! Take care of yourself, Goddamnit!”

Feedback

This story was written in chronological order. However, for those short on time, I've listed in the Table of Contents an "Importance #" with #1 being what I felt like was the most important step which helped me heal my headaches. Sorry if the Table of Contents is so overwhelming that it gives you a headache or intensifies one! I mean only to keep it descriptive so that it is easy for people to jump to the chapters they find most interesting or helpful. If you are reading this as an eBook, you should be able to click any chapter of interest to jump there. Of course, I think that reading this from front-to-back will be most-helpful, but I'm an author. And here is my definition of an author:

Author: "Someone with such a large ego as to actually think the words they write are worth people's time."

Who should read this? "Everyone!" says the egotistical author. Why? Because basically everyone has had a headache before or knows someone living in chronic pain, and it is my sincere hope that by learning about how I healed a really intense headache, some chapters might help other people as well. I am writing this in a story-like format, but I think it will be most-

helpful to those suffering from chronic headaches, whether it be tension or cluster headaches (both of which I was diagnosed with) or migraines, or any other sort. However, like I said, I hope it will be helpful for anyone suffering with chronic pain.

How should one read this? It depends on who you are. If you are one of the lucky people in the world who does not have chronic headaches or chronic pain, I think you could just read it like an adventure novel, hopefully gaining greater awareness and appreciation for headache-sufferers. Some medical doctors suggest that the worst kind of migraines or cluster headaches can be the highest amount of pain that any human condition provides, even more than childbirth, passing kidney stones, or being bit by highly venomous snakes and spiders. Sufferers of the latter, by the way, often ask for their bitten arms to be amputated... they would rather lose an arm for the rest of their life than deal with the pain of the bite. Such is the condition I found myself, and many modern humans find ourselves, except the pain is in our head, and so suicidal thoughts are very common. I try to tell my story in a fun manner... but in reality, chronic headaches are no laughing matter. I hope that my story gives you a bit more patience and understanding when a coworker has to call in sick due to a migraine, for example.

If you *are* one of the “lucky” ones with a chronic headache (and I explain in the 48th chapter why you are lucky), then I would read this book slowly and carefully, pausing at the end of each chapter to write in a journal, and ask yourself probing questions to see if there are lessons which can help you. It would be most-helpful to take this to a book-club and have a group of people share impressions about each chapter, and engage in deep conversations. If you don't have a group of friends who would be interested in a book-club, you could even start your own "meet-up" group or put up an ad on Craigslist to find like-minded people. Connecting with interesting people is a major theme in my 49 steps, and I think it can really help anyone. In future editions of this I may offer a "workbook"-type section at

the end of each chapter to help facilitate with this. Email me at etsagan@etsagan.com if this would be something you would like to see. I'd also like to hear which sections of the book were most interesting or helpful. Feel free to ask me a quick question or advice about your headache, and I will make an effort to write a quick response back. I'm writing this book because it is something I wish I would have seen during my dark journey, and truly hope it can provide some helpful tips.

My website at www.etsagan.com has a headache wiki which I'm hoping can be a great place for all headache-sufferers to meet each other, and list and browse various therapies which have helped them.

Another thing I'd appreciate you emailing me about; Option 1 or Option 2. I'll explain. I'm feeling really conflicted about whether I am writing this book in the most-helpful way. I am afraid that very few readers will read past chapter 10. I think I might put off half of the readers by being too hippy-like, and bore the other half by inserting too much technical scientific research, leaving only a few people like me, who are kind-of Hippy Scientists, and I know that we are a rare breed. Perhaps there will also be scientific-loving readers who continue to read past chapter 10 not because they *are* a hippy, but because they like *laughing* at hippies...then it might just work out. So for future editions I'm thinking about either Option 1- keeping it the same, but updating it with pictures and more recent research or Option 2- essentially break this into two types of books a) just a story, with what I learned (the majority of the book as it is now) and then b) Take out some of chapters 1-10 and expand on them in a pure, hard-core, geeked-out scientific literature review on headaches with nonstop figures, quotes, data, and my interpretation and rephrasing of the data in less-technical terms. I suppose I could also do Option 3- keep it as it is, but also offer a workbook and also offer a headache literature review book. I only want to do what is most-helpful to my reader base, and I'm not sure who that is, who *you* are yet. So let me know! Email me

what would be most-helpful for you! I honestly would appreciate it!

Lastly, I suppose I should say the usual, boring reminder that even though I have a Ph.D. in chemistry, and I am the kind of person MD's turn to for pharmaceutical help, I am *not* a medical doctor, and readers should be advised not to treat this document as a literal guaranteed therapy at face-value. This document should be read more like "look in this direction, and do more research with a qualified professional if you are interested". I certainly don't recommend following my footsteps regarding swimming naked for > 2 hours in 47°F water in the Puget Sound, or picking up murderous hitch-hikers, or living homeless for three years! However, feel free to live vicariously through me so that you don't have to repeat my mistakes/adventures!

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