

ONE SIMPLE CHANGE

Makes Life Easy



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LIBRARY OF WISDOM CLASSICS

One Simple Change Makes Life Easy

Candice O'Denver

The Library of Wisdom Classics

Dedication

Awareness, Wisdom and Compassion for All

One Simple Change Makes Life Easy

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Author's Introduction

We are happy to be able to offer this book to our friends spread out across the globe. It is a book that will change the way you look at yourself and the world. It will bring great ease and comfort to your mind and body, and make your relationships much more interesting and enjoyable. In this book you will find one simple change in the use of the mind that brings about mental and emotional stability, insight, compassion, and skillful ways of living life.

When I was a young woman I began using this simple change in my own life, and it has given me a life of joy, friendship, and the ability to be of benefit to the world.

I'd like to share with you how this book about 'one simple change' came about. As a child I wondered at the fact that everything seemed to be connected. When I was aware of this profound connection, I felt carefree and joyful, and I liked the world and everyone in it! I could see that it was impossible to take any one thing, remove it from the whole, and make it into an entirely different and separate thing. This insight fascinated me from early on. It had a deep meaning for me, and I wanted to be able to easily describe the insight, yet whenever I tried, I was at a loss for words.

I had heard the word "indivisible" used, and I felt that the concept of indivisibility applied to my experience of the world. I asked my mother what "indivisible" meant, and she showed me how to find the word in the dictionary. The definition I found was: "incapable of undergoing division." It was very exciting to me that there was a word for this insight I had had, and that the definition for this word was so readily available for anyone who just looked in a dictionary.

I became interested in all kinds of writing that described the indivisible nature of everything, because whenever I read books that attempted to describe indivisibility, the words in the books seemed to elicit in me the instinctive realization of this special way of looking at things. I wanted that experience to be permanent in myself, and I wanted to be able to share that experience with others. I searched for a book that was completely filled with writing that directly evoked that experience, but I never found one. I knew that if such a book actually existed, it would be of great fortune to everyone. It seemed that if people related to one another in this special way, there could be really great communication and a feeling of friendship among everyone in the world!

Growing up, I was taught many things that I was told would lead to happiness. Yet, all of them seemed difficult to learn, when compared to the instinctive sense of happiness that was associated with the indivisibility of everything. I tried many activities that were supposed to help bring about well-being and self-respect, such as: education, religion, community service, compassionate action, work, family life, friends, intimate relationships, food, money, leisure pursuits, and so forth. I used psychological, spiritual, medical, and mental methods to try to change my thoughts and emotions into better thoughts and emotions. I looked for the right people and right situations to bring about happiness.

No matter how hard I tried to be happy through these means, happiness was always just out of reach. The benefit from all these activities and situations never compared to the soothing energy of deep understanding that came from knowing that everything is inseparable. I knew there was something untapped within me, but I didn't know how to find that innate resource.

Then something amazing happened—my life fell apart at the seams! As I struggled to make sense of unexpected and violent events that I faced, I couldn't get back on track with my old way of living. My best ideas failed me. Filled with intense emotions, thoughts, and sensations, I felt that I could not face life with the tools I had used. Old ideas availed me nothing. I simply could not rely on any external or internal strategy that I had employed, and I could not stop the thoughts and emotions that were racing through my mind.

Filled with fear of the future, bewildered by the past, and desperate in the present, suddenly I realized that all of the turmoil—the thoughts, emotions, sensations, and other experiences—were appearing within an open, soothing, and indivisible space of relief. I found that by the power of resting as that relief for short moments, repeated many times, I gradually began to identify with inherent relief and serenity—rather than with the turmoil. Increasingly, I realized the turmoil was actually the dynamic energy of a vast indivisible space or intelligence that was not limited to me or my experiences.

In fact, everything whatsoever was simply the unconfined creativity of indivisible intelligence. By persevering in my simple practice, I found a wellspring of natural warmth, connection, and compassion arising in my thoughts, emotions, and actions, along with insights into the nature of existence. Along the way, life got better and better, and my abilities to contribute to the benefit of all flourished. All this came about through the simple practice of resting for short moments, repeated many times, until it became automatic.

As I began to share my experience of short moments, many times with others, their lives began changing dramatically for the better. My life became filled with the purpose of sharing with other

people this one simple change in the use of the mind. This change is the basis of the ability to solve all problems. Many of the people who experienced similar results in their lives joined together with me to start the Great Freedom movement, which has now spread all over the world like the warm rays of the ever-shining sun!

My youthful vision of friendship and good communication among the people of the world is becoming a reality! Finally, we have not just one book, but many books that beautifully describe the indivisibility of everything, and this is one of them!

Last of all, I would like to say, if you dream big dreams, know that you can make them real! All the power you need to fulfill your vision will be found in short moments, repeated many times, until it becomes obvious at all times.

I am deeply appreciative of the kindness and mastery of Scott Morrow who led the skilled and dedicated team from throughout the world that transcribed, compiled, and edited the talks in this book. I would also like to specifically thank a friend who would like to remain anonymous, Robin Goddard, Simon Hook, Matt Long, Keith Rust, and Swami Sarvamangalananda, who along with many others contributed so much to preparing this book for publication.

I am continually grateful to Heather Byrne, Mia Castle, Kathy Raysz, and Jochen Raysz for their loving friendship and beneficial teaching and management activities that are of great support to me every moment of every day. The Great Freedom teachers and participants are carrying the message of one simple change around the world, and due to them the friendly faces of Great Freedom are everywhere.

Editor's Introduction

The material for this book comes from public talks given by Candice O'Denver, the founder of the Great Freedom movement, in 2007 in India, the United States, and Sweden. The tone and style of the various chapters reflect the atmosphere present in those talks—warm, friendly, intimate, and conversational. As a result, the language one finds here is generally informal and relaxed and is meant to make it as simple as possible for the reader to benefit from what is spoken.

However, it is not the words or ideas themselves that are the most important aspect of the communication, but rather the 'ease of being' inherent in these words and ideas. The reader is encouraged to allow her or himself the opportunity to receive what is being described in a completely open and receptive way, without grasping for intellectual understanding. As Candice says humorously, "Intellectual understanding is the booby prize!" Above all, what is written here is not meant for intellectual speculation; rather, it is an introduction to the instinctive recognition of restful awareness *in one's own experience*.

Each chapter begins with an introduction and explanation of the subject of the chapter, followed by questions and answers that help clarify awareness and illustrate its applicability and practicality in everyday life. After the initial introduction to the main ideas of "awareness," "resting" and "points of view" in Chapter One, the chapters may be read in any order without following a particular sequence.

Within each chapter is the key point and pivotal instruction of the Great Freedom Teaching: to rest naturally as awareness for short

moments repeated many times until it becomes automatic. This key point along with practical instruction is repeated again and again, in countless different ways, in order to speak to all kinds of readers.

Please note that this book is a compilation of transcriptions taken from Candice's talks, edited by volunteers from around the world who, along with Candice, did every bit of the work in the yearlong process of bringing this book to publication. The recording of hundreds of talks, posting them on the Internet as free downloads, transcribing more than 100 of those talks which resulted in over 1,600 pages of text, compiling, editing, proofreading, and re-editing were all carried out by grateful people whose main interest is to make available to everyone what has been so beneficial to them.

Scott Morrow
Skåne, Sweden
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One Simple Change Makes Life Easy

Chapter One

I invite you on a marvelous journey into a vast resource of peace, happiness, and skillfulness that exists within you. It's a journey that only you can take. No one else can do it for you. However, within the covers of this book, you'll find a constant friend and guide along the way, exact directions and instructions, and a global community of support for adopting the one simple change that makes life easy. Reading this book and putting its key points into practice will give you a life you never dreamt possible, no matter how good your life already is!

When starting out on a journey, it's important to know the language that will be used in the country we'll be visiting. For the purposes of this book, a simple language is used throughout, and that language will be defined in this chapter. Once you're familiar with the language, you'll find it very easy to find your way in our journey together.

I'd like to share another travel tip: as you read this book, don't try to understand it or memorize what is written here. Just put the one simple change into practice in an easygoing way. By the time you reach the end of the book, it's very likely you'll notice that, simply by reading the book, you'll be able to follow its instructions. So, just relax and enjoy our journey!

Now, let's take a look at the language we'll use in our travels by talking about the words "mind," "awareness," "resting," and "points of view." We'll look at how the words are used in this book and how they are connected to the one simple change we're making.

First of all, we can say that basically there are two approaches to the use of the human mind. In the first approach, the focus of the mind's activity is placed on its contents. Another term for "contents" is "points of view." A point of view is anything that occurs in the mind. It can be a thought, emotion, sensation, or intuition, and it can relate to inner or outer events. Points of view are anything that can be seen, felt, enacted, intuited, or experienced in any other way. Awareness is either involved in points of view, or it is naturally at ease. When awareness is involved in points of view, we forget how to relax and how to rest naturally as awareness.

In the second approach to the use of the mind, the focus is placed on one simple change—relaxing the mind rather than focusing on points of view. In this approach, all points of view are seen as appearances of awareness, which is the basis of mind. If you're wondering what awareness is, just stop thinking for a moment. That absence of thought is what awareness is! It is like the clear sky! You are still alert, cognizant, and aware, even though there is no thinking. However, whether there is lots of thinking or no thinking, it takes awareness to be aware of both. Nothing could be known without awareness. There isn't a human being anywhere on earth who can say, "I am not aware!"

So, the same awareness that's present when you stop thinking is also present in every thought. Over time, by the power of sustaining awareness for short moments, many times, confidence in awareness is nurtured until awareness becomes permanent and automatic at all times and in all situations—including the times when many thoughts are arising.

When the focus of the mind is placed on its contents, then our thoughts, emotions, speech, and activities will be directed to our own

needs and our striving to be good, comfortable, successful, kind, and happy. Even when we do things for others, it may seem like an effort, and it may be difficult to maintain a giving attitude without becoming resentful or expecting something in return. None of us likes that feeling!

The conventional beliefs about the mind regard it as being located in the brain and governed by the workings of the brain. This belief assumes that the mind depends on a combination of a person's outlook, personal psychology, environment, and biochemistry. In the context of this belief system, the mind is seen as sometimes being capable of providing happiness, and other times not. When we view the mind in this way, we may often feel at its whim, wanting to be in control of it, but realizing we really aren't. Sometimes the mind may seem like a foe we need to conquer.

When the mind is used to focus on points of view, our scope of awareness is restricted to those points of view. We assume that they make up our identity; in other words, we believe our identity is comprised of the accumulation of thoughts, emotions, and experiences over the course of our life.

It is likely we have thought that there was no choice but to focus on our points of view, and we may have been unaware of another possibility. We may not have known that the fundamental nature of the mind is awareness, and that we can rely on that awareness to develop a balanced view of all the points of view that occur within it.

When we relax the mind for a brief moment—rather than following after or blocking points of view—we experience the soothing energy and clarity of awareness. From the first time we choose to maintain awareness rather than following the story line of points of view, we experience a relief from our usual thought processes.

By repeating brief moments of awareness, many times, our attentiveness to the presence of awareness increases. More and more, we experience warmth, ease, compassion, a balanced outlook, innovative thinking, creativity, and an exceptional ability to make good decisions and solve problems. A simple word for this is "wisdom." Our thoughts, emotions, speech, and actions begin to spontaneously focus on the welfare and benefit of everyone, not just on ourselves. This innate ability to be at ease, wise, balanced, and compassionate is discovered when we relax the mind's focus on points of view. As the mind relaxes into awareness, points of view are recognized to be the dynamic energy of awareness.

Points of view and awareness can be likened to a breeze blowing through the air. The breeze and the air are inseparable. Both are air. When a breeze blows, it is the dynamic energy of air. When points of view stir, they are the dynamic energy of awareness.

Like the color blue is inseparable from the sky, points of view are inseparable from awareness. We come to realize that no point of view has an origin independent of awareness.

Amazingly, when we look for the mind, all we can definitively state as our direct experience of the mind is that we are aware of points of view. When we examine the mind in this way, we discover that awareness is the constant in all points of view, including the point of view of mind. Each appearance in the mind is distinct and clear, yet cannot be found to have an origin or substance other than awareness. When we look at the mind in this way, we see that rather than there being a mind that is a storage device for perceptions, it is awareness itself that is inclusive of all points of view.

All of the appearances in awareness are like a mirage or hologram, vivid in their own right, but without an origin other than

awareness. There are two aspects of points of view: one aspect being a description or label, and the other being the forever empty, always abiding, and resting aspect that is implicit in this aware intelligence that is the basis of everything. If we do not understand these two aspects, we will consider points of view to have far more significance than they actually do.

When our conventional belief systems and assumptions about mind are at play, we divide our points of view into positive, negative, and neutral categories. We are constantly trying to improve our thoughts, emotions, speech, and actions, in order to make them positive rather than negative. It is believed that being a good person comes from the effort involved in organizing our points of view into those that would be considered good by most people or by our friendship group.

It is certainly worthwhile to be a good and kind person, but the actual basis for ultimate goodness in human beings is an innate wisdom quality of the mind—awareness. “Innate” means it requires no thought or other effort; it is already naturally present within us. We find that ultimate wisdom and skillful means are already present in awareness. This may be very hard for us to understand at first, but understanding will come with growing confidence in the direct experience of awareness.

We have learned points of view from other people from the moment we were born, and the tendency has been to collapse our awareness of people and circumstances into points of view. This collapsing happens so fast that it is hard to see it happening. Almost immediately, and certainly over time, the points of view we assume to be true become the entire focus of our attention—the reality we seem to know. They limit what is possible in our life, robbing us of

permanent recognition of happiness, joy, pleasure, friendliness, creativity, productivity, cooperation, and effectiveness.

All points of view are related to awareness in the same way that a mirage or a hologram is related to space. Even though a mirage or hologram may look very real and seems to be vividly apparent, it has no nature that is independent of its source in space. Likewise, even though points of view may seem very real, they have no nature or power of their own that is independent of awareness. For awareness to become fully evident, we must commit to seeing point of view *as it is*—as having no independent nature.

Awareness contains all points of view. Just as colors are inseparable from a rainbow, points of view are inseparable from awareness.

When points of view arise, let them be, and do not cling to them! They are like the flight path of a bird in the sky. The bird's flight path vanishes without a trace, and each previous point of view vanishes without effect. Do not attempt to prolong a point of view by pursuing, avoiding, or replacing it. The bird's future flight path is yet nonexistent—so you don't need to anticipate the next point of view. The present bird path is indivisible from open sky, and the present point of view has an open natural presence that is indivisible from awareness. Leave it alone and refrain from trying to change it in some way. This is what it means to rest as awareness.

As points of view appear, rest as awareness! This is the essential practice during daily activities. If one doesn't follow after a point of view and doesn't develop a story about it, the point of view is naturally released in awareness.

We will now examine the most important choice we have to make in each moment of life: the choice of how we use awareness. If

we choose to use our awareness to describe everything, we get lost in descriptions, and we find ourselves on a roller coaster ride of thoughts, emotions, and other experiences. If we choose instead to let awareness simply be for brief moments, we increasingly enjoy soothing energy and a balanced view. Simply stated, resting as awareness is recognition of awareness, and constant distraction by points of view is non-recognition of awareness.

On our journey together, the cultivation of awareness is referred to as “resting naturally” or “resting as awareness.” To rest as awareness is to cultivate many moments of awareness, many times, until it becomes automatic and permanent. When we stop the constant thinking about points of view and simply rest as awareness, we experience powerful wisdom. We realize that all points of view have their origin in awareness, and that no point of view can be found to exist in its own right.

Resting in awareness is best, because we directly experience freedom from worry and concern. We’re better able to be of benefit to ourselves, family, community, and in the world. When we rest naturally in awareness, we tap into our innate strengths, gifts, and talents and contribute them to the benefit of the whole.

To rest or not to rest: that is the question!

Here is a very practical suggestion: at the very moment points of view form, let your awareness remain open, and allow your perception to be serene and spacious. That is resting as awareness. That *is* awareness—that is awareness which has no point from which to view. By the power of simply resting as awareness, the experience becomes increasingly obvious, and points of view vanish naturally.

Because of the long-held habit of not recognizing awareness, the brief moments of awareness may not last long at first. In other words,

the brief moment of awareness may almost immediately slip away. There may be no stability. That is why it is important to rest for short moments, repeated many times, until it becomes automatic. Rather than sitting for long periods only a few times a day, it is better to rest as awareness for short moments throughout the day, repeated again and again.

By repeating the recognition of awareness, we grow used to it. "Many times" means that we need to grow more and more confident in ordinary awareness. This is the key point in how to rest as awareness for short moments, many times.

By persisting in this one simple change in the use of the mind, we see benefits from the outset. The first time we make the choice to rest as awareness rather than getting lost in thinking about our mental, physical, and emotional states, we sense the power of the complete relief to be found in maintaining awareness.

It makes no difference what points of view arise. In the moment of resting as awareness, it is impossible for there not to be a soothing openness in which they vanish naturally, leaving no trace, like a line drawn in water. At that point, in the wake of their vanishing, identify awareness, relaxed and enormously potent. In letting point of view be by resting as awareness, mental and emotional stability, insightfulness, and skillful qualities and activities become increasingly evident.

What begins as brief moments of awareness starts to last for longer periods of time. By the power of resting as awareness, it grows to last a full day, weeks, months, years, and then an entire lifetime. The very first moment of awareness already has the full-blown result of relief, compassion, and self-benefit. By acknowledging awareness

again and again, ups and downs and disturbing states diminish and then resolve completely.

If we apply ourselves to sincerely resting as awareness, there comes a time when we discover stable awareness. When we experience this, suddenly life becomes a lot easier. We realize that this amazing awareness isn't out of reach at all. Simply allow awareness to be sustained. When it's totally easy and simple to recognize awareness in all daily activities, we become confident in awareness, and eventually it remains stable.

Resting as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, until it becomes automatic is to briefly return to awareness again and again, because it is this non-distraction that brings us all the way to complete wisdom, love, and tremendous beneficial energy.

If we rely on this one simple change in the use of the mind that is found in resting as awareness, we will prove to ourselves that it is powerful beyond measure. It is the primary skill we need in life to ensure our well-being in all situations.

When the sun rises at daybreak, we don't have to wait for it to be warm and brilliant. The midday sun may be stronger than the early morning sun, but all of its warming and illuminating qualities are present from the very first moment, even if they may not be fully apparent. It's the same with resting as awareness. From the beginning, its power of wisdom is naturally present. What is essential is to maintain awareness in order to attain stability.

It is crucial to understand that awareness is endowed with perfect qualities. By the single power of resting as awareness, all faults are exhausted and all qualities are naturally perfected.

Because the non-recognition of awareness is momentary, it can be cleared away and seen through by the simple power of resting as

awareness. Then wisdom and skillful ways of living life become obvious at all times. It's very important to understand this.

Simply sustain awareness. Until awareness is fully evident at all times, maintain moments of awareness that are open and spacious like the sky.

Now, I'd like to share with you briefly about the global support system that is available for people who are resting as awareness. Great Freedom is a worldwide movement of people offering 24/7 mutual support for resting as awareness. This support is given face-to-face, via email, on the Internet, and by telephone. We are not alone. When we build confidence in Great Freedom's Four Comforts, which are: 1) resting as awareness, 2) the teacher of awareness, 3) the teaching of awareness, and 4) the community of people throughout the world who maintain awareness, we can know that we will increasingly experience the soothing energy of awareness, and will never be fooled by appearances of points of view, not during our life and not upon our death.

Well, there you have it! We have learned the language that will be used on our journey, so we're ready to go!

Be Gentle with Yourself

Chapter Two

"The essence of your own being doesn't need anything to prop it up—it simply is, so relax and enjoy! Please don't be unkind to yourself any longer. I really ask you this from my heart."

Powerful urges and emotions arise in us; they just come, and then they go. Even though their labels are often vivid, distinct, and powerful, they have no independent existence outside of awareness. These things appear to be so real and compelling and seem to be reasons for us to feel shame, humiliation, guilt, and fear, but the truth is that we have a choice as to how we relate to all of them. We can either get involved in them, feeling limited by their labels, or we can simply sustain awareness as they appear and pass away.

Many of us spend our whole life as if on trial for our points of view. It's as if we were sitting in the witness stand, and we look out and see that we are also the prosecutor, the defense attorney, the judge, and the jury all at once! However, it's not necessary to continually be interrogating ourselves about everything we have said and done. We have learned over the years to focus on these points of view and identify with them, but by doing so, we've kept ourselves in a prison. However, there's no need to worry. We've always been completely exonerated, because none of these points of view about which we've been questioning ourselves has an independent nature. When we simply maintain awareness, for short moments, repeated many times, this becomes obvious.

The truth is, we don't need to change anything. There are people on death row who are resting as awareness, and they've been able to completely come to terms with everything that has gone on in their lives. They have found a way to live a life of total freedom and stability in that monastery called prison. If we think that our thoughts, emotions, experiences, and circumstances need to be changed in order to realize who we are, or if we think that the projections of our own minds need to be changed, we are in shackles. *Nothing* needs to be changed. The natural state, the ease of our own being, is already guaranteed to everyone.

It is by allowing everything to be *as it is* that we open up to a profound wisdom that has been unknown to us. This wisdom is powerfully responsive in all situations. It is the wisdom of a balanced view that is not dependent on descriptive frameworks.

I invite all of you to put a complete stop to the addiction to labeling each and every occurrence. When we persist in labeling ourselves and others, we engage in a machine-like war within ourselves. In doing so, we judge certain of our appearances to be good and others to be bad, and we become like robots sorting thoughts: "These are the good ones, and these are the bad ones; I've got to get more good ones, and I've got to get rid of the bad ones. I've got to show everybody else what my good ones are, so they will accept me, and then maybe *I* can think that I am acceptable." Beyond all the extremes, beyond the labels of good and bad, is wisdom. Wisdom does not need anything to be good; it is already wholly positive in and of itself.

Come to a complete stop and enrich yourself and the whole world with the awareness that's at the basis of everything. No one is dependent on any label to *be*. Being *is*, regardless of labels. The only

self-essence of any label is forever flawless awareness, so why not look at everything from the vantage of awareness rather than through the foggy filters of labels? The essence of your own being doesn't need anything to prop it up—it simply is, so relax and enjoy! Please don't be mean to yourself any longer. I really ask you this from my heart.

We may all have had thoughts come up like, "Oh, will I ever be happy? Will I ever be able to overcome the things that have bothered me? Will I ever be able to get over the things that people have done to me?" Know that it's possible to remain as awareness whatever the appearance might be. Don't ever settle for any label about anything. To hold to any idea like, "This is the way it's always been, and this is the way it's going to be from now on," is so totally limiting. When we rest in the natural ease of being, we discover that every single moment is the supreme moment of complete spaciousness that has never been tied to anything. It's completely pure, entirely restful, and is filled with an energy beyond anything that can ever be cooked up through points of view.

Through sustaining awareness, we find that we live our life in a happy, friendly way, taking good care of ourselves and others. We don't yell and scream at ourselves about our thoughts and feelings, and when we don't do that to ourselves anymore, we don't do it to others either. Even if someone has done something hideous, when we look at them, we recognize first and foremost that they've acted out of their points of view, just as we have all our lives. We can understand that if we had the same points of view, we would have behaved exactly as they did.

If in our relationships we choose to scream and yell, and to shame and blame people, well, that's just one way of going about things, but it's not the only way. When we're profoundly at rest, we

find an immense force and power within us that allows us to take action that is freed of that kind of expression of point of view. It's an action that is penetrating and incisive and cuts through everything. Who knows what that action might be? It might be a kind word, or a small act of caring, or some simple expression of love, or, it might be solving the problem of world hunger or getting clean water for everybody.

Whatever it is, it will be done with laser-like clarity that's completely free from judgments and limiting points of view. The emotions will do whatever they do, but they're not the source of our response—wisdom is the source. All of this happens naturally and spontaneously without any contrivance or artifice at all. When we take it upon ourselves to act as nature does, then we begin to see the truly natural order of everything, and we are able to live and respond appropriately to our own individual life and to the lives of everyone else.

I would ask you once again to be gentle with yourselves and others. When we can look at people in this gentle way, we know what makes them tick, because we've learned what makes us tick. Does that mean that we just sit back and let people murder and maim and do whatever they want to do? No, it doesn't mean that at all. Awareness overcomes all negativity with the balanced view of wisdom. This means that our primary relationship with everyone is from the self-perfect nature of awareness, because through rest we've come to see that we are all part of the natural order of everything. To realize this does not require exertion. Everything is completely at ease, no matter what it is.

As the ease of our own being becomes more and more obvious to us, then we know what love is. Love and ease are equal and

synonymous. Love is our true nature. We were meant to love others and ourselves without excluding anything. Nothing needs to be manipulated, coaxed to another level, or changed. Many of us have been taught that we need to improve ourselves throughout our lives, and that we're going to have to work hard at it because our basic nature is flawed. These are things I learned too, but I finally found something much different to be true: I found that awareness has never been flawed in any way, and that short moments of awareness, repeated again and again, become automatic.

The original purity of everything supersedes all ideas about anything. No one is marked with any kind of original sin or karma. Go to the ground of your own being for a brief moment—the complete ease that is the entire basic space of every thought, emotion, and experience—and you'll know that all of those ideas, like original sin and karma, don't apply to your most basic nature, and they never have. The pure intelligence of everything *as it is*, is completely pure, like space. Rest in that and your intelligence will be penetrating, wholly positive, and inconceivably beneficial.

When we substantialize ourselves as a personal identity and don't have familiarity with the authentic source of being provided in awareness, discord and great discomfort are created. Once we substantialize ourselves and substantialize everyone else, we are at war internally, and we create war with others. There can never be peace in the world until there's peace within. Only when we as human beings elect to be at peace with all our mental and emotional appearances and end the war within can we express peace as a species. Of course, that would be wonderful, and we'd all love to see that, but where does it begin? It doesn't begin with diplomacy between nations, and it can't be accomplished through political ideology. It

begins with individual human beings saying, “This is who I really am, and I’m going to take responsibility for living as that. I’m going to find this peace within myself by relying on awareness and hold myself to account for embodying that peace on a daily basis.”

I can guarantee that from that resolve something truly amazing will open up. When we rest as the wisdom that’s the basis of everything, we end the war within ourselves, and we become naturally compassionate towards others in an uncontrived way—a way that we don’t have to cultivate, and that naturally spills over to everyone. We see everyone more and more through the eyes of kindness.

Another way of describing this is to say that when we rest, we are resting as love. Love is already within us; it’s what we really are, and this connects us with everyone and everything. In love there is no separation, and it’s in this love that there is a haven of complete and immense safety and comfort. From the beginning of our lives we’ve looked for safety, comfort, and love from our caregivers, our homes, and outer circumstances, but we were never really able to find safety or comfort that we could ultimately count on. Pretty soon we started to look to other places, like romance, food, money, work, and so on, but the safety and comfort somehow always escaped our grasp. Through rest we discover that the nature of our own being is the absolute safety and absolute love that we’ve been seeking. Until we rest in that basis, life will be fraught with uncertainty.

Whatever we are looking for anywhere else, it already exists within us. It’s only by resting repeatedly, over and over again, that we gain familiarity with it, and we find the real safety and comfort we’ve always been looking for. No matter where we are searching, unless we know this underlying basis that is the utterly safe haven of rest, we just can’t find a truly safe place anywhere.

Q: I feel that so many organizations, governments, and political leaders have betrayed my trust, that it's hard for me not to scream and yell about the things they've done. It seems to me that if we're dealing with unjust and corrupt people and organizations, a gentle and benevolent approach like you're advocating will never work. Could you comment on that?

Candice: Whatever we buy into, that is what becomes real to us. We can be very limited by the belief systems and assumptions we have about life. We appraise the world and all beings in it as being objects that are either beneficial or harmful to us, and we're convinced that these objects have the power to affect our thoughts and emotions. Based on that conviction, if an organization or a government acts in a certain way, then that action will seem to have the power to affect our thinking and emotional states. We might feel either hopeful or afraid, depending on what the government is doing and what our belief systems and assumptions are about that government.

If there's only this one way of looking at things, then our experience will be very frustrating; we'll be at the mercy of events beyond our control. In the scenario I have just described, it's our thoughts that have created our experience of the world. We know that different people experiencing the same situation will have a wide range of responses depending on their own thoughts and emotions. One person can be in a concentration camp and be terrified, overwhelmed, and unable to cope, and another person in the same situation can develop great compassion and become a great philosopher. One person sees a horrible situation as totally harmful, while another person sees it as actually being of benefit in some way.

Let's say two people have great wealth. One person might be totally paranoid and would withdraw from the world and try to protect and hoard everything he has. Another person in the same situation might be very contented and always looking for ways to use her resources to benefit others. These different reactions are based on the thoughts and emotions that comprise what most people think of as their mind.

When we're looking through this limited filter of thoughts and emotions, it's like looking through a low-powered telescope that can only vaguely see what's going on in a certain section of the sky. On the other hand, with a high-powered telescope looking at the same area, one can see the entire panorama in all its vividness. Rather than prizing the ability to describe, explain, and experience—the small telescope, as it were—what we're beginning to see in the world today is the advent of people who are more focused on actually getting familiar with the ground of being itself. They're more interested in seeing what things look like through the much higher-powered telescope of awareness, rather than just explaining, describing, and categorizing things. This is a radical and revolutionary step for humankind.

When we talk about any of these things—life, being, explaining, describing, experiencing—what is it that's actually aware of all those things? That which is aware is the basic space of everything. It's aware of all points of view, all belief systems, and all assumptions, and yet is unaffected by any of them. This is what should be known and experienced, rather than being mired only in thoughts and emotions.

Q: In the end it seems that there's nothing that can really be done about the fear I so often feel, because it just comes up when it will.

Candice: Fear has no power to confuse us whatsoever, because it has no independent nature. It's really nothing but awareness. It's like a star shooting across an empty sky, leaving no trace. If we elaborate on the fear and give it power, then it *will* have power. If we don't rest and we try to apply an antidote to the fear, then that gives the fear more power. Conversely, if we rest when the fear comes up, it will vanish on its own, and that's how we know the fear has no real power. Fear is nothing, really. One of the signs of accomplishment of awareness is fearlessness. This does not mean that fear never appears in awareness. It means that when fear or anything else appears, there is fearlessness. Fear and fearlessness are not two.

Q: I'm seeing more and more how one of the fundamental issues in people's lives is another type of fear—fear of rejection. It seems to come up very, very strongly, and I wonder if fear of rejection might be resolved through resting.

Candice: When we take ourselves to be a personal identity, we are substantializing ourselves with our points of view, so that we seem like something solid and stable. We take ourselves to be an individual defined by our points of view. Once we've established ourselves as someone in that regard, then we will also establish everyone else as an "other" to that self. Once that structure is in place, we begin to fear that others will reject our points of view, because our points of view are what we take ourselves to be. I would say that this is something common to almost everyone. We're afraid that the points of view of others won't match up with our points of view and that they're going to reject us. Of course, we'll never find anyone whose points of view match up with ours exactly.

Human beings are pack animals, so to be ostracized from the pack is the ultimate rejection. As long as we think we are somebody, this kind of fear will be going on. But it's really no big deal. When it comes up, rest as awareness, and what we need to know will be known. Fear of rejection is definitely something to go beyond. It is extremely limiting to continually hope that people won't reject us and fear that they will, or hope that we'll fit in and fear that we won't.

What we're really hoping is that junior high school will never reoccur! We don't want to ever again experience the kind of rejection we felt from other out-of-control adolescents who were joining cliques, saying that we weren't in their cliques, and then saying all kinds of mean things to each other and to us. That's a hideously painful time, and we're always hoping that it won't happen again, but we're subtly afraid that it will. This is all part of taking ourselves to be our points of view and taking other people to be their points of view too.

The act of either rejecting or accepting people is an entirely dualistic behavior. Human beings have created many institutions where there is no openness and where situations of fear are created. No matter what kind of organization we join, there is always this subtle underlying tone that if we don't toe the line we can be thrown out. It's impossible for people who are truly living in awareness to ever perpetuate those kinds of institutions. Human beings are fully capable of creating institutions where people know they are welcome lifelong. These kinds of institutions are purely democratic, nonhierarchical, and require few rules. Their guidelines simply serve the group unity and purpose. Rather than imposing restrictions, these are organizations where mutual support and success are fostered in everyone. That's what we're doing in Great Freedom.

If I worried about whether or not people rejected me, I could never give these talks, because there are all kinds of opinions about me and what the Great Freedom Teaching has to say. But awareness is beyond all conventional attachments of every kind. For me, there isn't any thought about personal things like being accepted or rejected by other people or by institutions. There's just the fervent passion to cultivate a world in which there is immediate benefit for everyone through the power of gaining confidence in awareness. Remember, short moments repeated many times become automatic.

Obedience to the Unenforceable

Chapter Three

Obedience to the unenforceable is found in awareness. It is acting according to the non-action of effortless wisdom that is conclusively for the benefit of all in every conceivable way."

There's nothing whatsoever that needs to be done about anything in order to be aware and wise. Enjoy the ease of your own being *as it is* in which nothing need be done and nothing needs to change. However you're living your life and whatever the circumstances of your life may be, they're the perfect circumstances for gaining confidence in awareness. Whatever your perception of your situation may be, that situation is indivisible from awareness. All is known clearly and directly in the awareness that is the basis of everything.

The perception called "you" is a point of view inseparable from awareness, just as the appearance of everything else is a point of view inseparable from awareness. There's no entity or force that can somehow do anything to keep anyone away from awareness. It is simply untrue that there are any obstacles between you and awareness.

Please don't worry about all the concepts and the difficult ways of doing things you may have taken on because of obedience to one philosophy or another. If you want to be obedient, be obedient to the unenforceable! Obedience to the unenforceable: that is the supreme and ultimate obedience and the only real obedience there is. Otherwise, there's obedience to the attempt to sort out and rearrange all our thoughts, emotions, and experiences. When we spend our lives trying to rearrange everything in order to be happy, it's like trying to

put together a one trillion-piece jigsaw puzzle of the cloudless sky. In other words, nothing will come from it, and the process will be exhausting and frustrating and will never lead anywhere.

Now, for many of us, what we've in fact been practicing is obedience to the enforceable, which is the assumption that our thoughts, emotions, and experiences can force us to feel one way or another. Obedience to the enforceable means that we obey our thoughts and emotions according to whatever their label may be. I'll give a personal example of this: I was told that my name was Candice and that I was a girl, so I began practicing obedience to having that name and being that gender. Then other characteristics and qualities were added over time to describe me, and those became my belief systems as well. I was born into a Catholic family, so I started practicing obedience to the idea that I was a Catholic, and that there was a God and that he needed to be feared. I learned that this absolute being was keeping a scorecard, and on that scorecard were lists of my good and bad attributes. Of course, in my mind the list for the bad things was much longer, because I could never get rid of the negative side that always seemed to be there!

I also learned obedience to other things, like taking myself to be of a certain race, and that I was an American, and that I had a certain type of intelligence and emotional makeup. As I grew older, more and more belief systems were added on: political views, psychology, philosophy, and many others. I practiced obedience to all those things with great fervor until I was in my late twenties, at which point I looked around and just didn't know where to go from there. I had collected so many belief systems in creating my identity that I was dizzied by them all.

I finally got into a situation in my life where things started to go in a way I hadn't expected, and I didn't know what to do. The obedience I had to all those belief systems didn't help me at all. I could find nothing in those points of view that could support or sustain me. I looked to one point of view, and it wouldn't help; I would look to another, and it wouldn't help. In addition to the belief systems, I had even added in a few other antidotes to take the edge off when I needed relief. I would have a drink, or smoke marijuana, or socialize, or immerse myself in work, but none of that helped either. It didn't matter where I sought my solace; at that point in my life none of the antidotes I'd previously relied on gave any relief whatsoever.

When I realized that relief was not to be found in any of these beliefs, I crashed. Suddenly my life looked completely bleak, and the years ahead didn't look like they would be any better. I got into an extended state of total hopelessness, but in that complete hopelessness and despair I somehow realized that all of the intense emotions and disturbing states actually had the same underlying basis, a basis that wasn't affected by those emotions. I didn't really have a concept to describe it then, but I knew that when I rested my mind for short moments, repeated many times, I felt the total presence of relief. When any of these inflammatory appearances would emerge, I would rest as the basis from which they had sprung. Over time the resting became more and more automatic, until it was permanent at all times with no division between what appeared and the awareness in which it had appeared.

Anyone who becomes totally familiar with awareness as it is being described here says exactly the same thing, namely, that awareness simply *is*. It's not generated by anything. It is non-produced; it is unborn; it is indescribable; yet, it is naturally present.

That recognition brings with it the true humility that is the obedience to the unenforceable, which is obedience to the awareness dwelling in every heart. This is not some kind of nihilistic philosophy that says that everything comes from nothing and leads to nothing, so we can do whatever we want to do. It isn't that at all. We must act as though our conduct were before the highest judge of awareness.

This is very important. "Acting as if before the highest judge" is another way of expressing obedience to the unenforceable. The appearances are all equal, but that doesn't mean that we merely act according to the appearances; we act in accordance with the underlying principle of unity. We act according to the non-action of effortless wisdom that benefits all in every conceivable way.

Q: You are saying that our behavior should be as if standing before the highest judge, but I know very well that often in the past I've not acted in that way. In light of what you're describing, what is the best way for me to make amends for the harm I've caused others?

Candice: If we feel guilty about harm we've caused, then through rest we can make a very powerful change. Instead of going into all the stories of guilt and blame, we simply rest as awareness. If we have harmed others, we cannot possibly know what kind of amends need to be made unless we are resting.

There are a couple of good ways to make amends with people whom we've harmed through our actions. First, within ourselves we can say, "I'm truly sorry that I did this," because we've recognized the harm we caused and don't want to repeat it. A very simple and direct action is then to say to the person, "I'm sorry that this occurred, and I promise you it won't happen again." A lot of times in the past we might have said we were sorry, but then we continued doing the same

things over and over again. For example, we might have been perpetually late, and every time we were late, we said we were sorry, but then we persisted in always being late! Rather than carrying on with behaviors for which we have to continually apologize, we should choose to make a direct change: when we make an appointment for a certain time, we arrive at or before the appointed hour.

The change we're trying to make may require a very high level of commitment. If we're very serious, we might say, "I vow that I will never do this again, even if my life is in jeopardy." Why won't we ever do it again? Because by the power of sustaining awareness we naturally want to benefit ourselves and others. That's what our vow is: to rest as awareness and gain mastery over this particular point of view that has caused harm to others. Then when we speak to the other person, we can do so having really looked into this matter very deeply, and we can say with utmost sincerity that we're really sorry this has happened and promise that it won't happen again. We've already decided within ourselves that it's not going to happen again; therefore, with full confidence we can promise them it won't happen again. This is really very powerful.

You see, resting as awareness means being fully relational. There is nothing to defend against or protect, so these responses come about naturally. We can follow through on our resolve easily and naturally, and we don't need to belabor things at all. When we learn how to make direct changes, we never have to muck around in guilt or blame again.

Q: I have been struggling with some negative behaviors that stem from how I was in the past. I find that I sometimes still act inappropriately and do things that harm myself and other people.

Candice: When you begin resting, this kind of coarse conduct just gradually gets ironed out, and the edge to everything softens, but the progress is usually gradual. One of the illustrations that has been used traditionally is the potter's wheel. If you're making a clay pot, you pump a pedal with your foot that makes the potter's wheel spin, and even after you stop pumping, the wheel keeps on going for a while before it finally stops.

Simply rest, for short moments, repeated many times, and allow everything to be as it is. Be filled with the joy and gratitude of having made the choice to relax your perceptions. Resting is such a relief and quite a boon for your life. It's like finding a huge treasure hidden in your house! Imagine having a huge pile of gold, but never having been able to recognize it, because you didn't know what gold was. You thought you were in poverty, but then all of a sudden when you're able to identify the gold, you realize, "Wow, I'm very wealthy!" The treasure of awareness has never been anywhere else; it was always right here, fully present within all appearances.

Q: Guilt and blame about things that have happened seem to loom so large in my life. Could you say something about this?

Candice: Let's take a little poll on suffering right now. How many people here have felt guilty? *(All the people in the audience raise their hands.)* How many people have blamed other people or themselves for their problems? *(All the hands go up.)* Okay, so you see, we are all in the same boat! Doesn't it feel good to see that you aren't the only one? When we're only swimming around in our own suffering, then it seems like we must be the only ones who have felt guilty or have blamed ourselves and others. It's important for us to come together and acknowledge how much we have in common.

We can suffer terribly for the guilt we feel within ourselves. We may actually feel guilty for things that other people have done to us, and we carry around this incredibly painful guilt all our lives. We feel that we must have done something wrong to make them harm us. This idea of being responsible for the harm someone else has caused is a very big source of hidden guilt in many people

What do we do when we start to see all these points of view? What we can do is to rest as awareness without elaborating on the points of view. Maybe we feel guilty for harm we've caused other people, but we're going to go nowhere in the resolution of that by thinking about it all the time or harboring intense emotional states related to that thinking. Only in resting when these feelings arise is it possible to go beyond all guilt and blame; otherwise, our whole life will be based on guilt and blame. Awareness is the essence of our being, but the only way to recognize this is to rest when these viewpoints come up.

Many actions of our life may be a playing out of guilt and blame in a strange way that we don't even perceive, because we're blind to it. This is one of the important things about the Twelve Inquiries Teaching of Great Freedom, which allows us to become familiar enough with our own points of view that we're not blindsided by them anymore. When they come up, we can rest as awareness, and gradually the guilt and blame take on an amusing tone. Instead of their crushing us as if we had Mt. Everest on our chest, our lifelong burden of guilt and blame is lifted.

Q: Something very harmful was done to me at a young age, and I find it extremely hard to forgive. I don't want to carry the burden of the blame anymore, but I still can't bring myself to forgive the person.

Candice: Often we have a thought or a memory that appears involving a hurtful image of something that happened or was done to us, and then maybe the next thought comes up, "Oh, that was horrible, but I need to forgive." All these are just points of view. It is only in resting as awareness that true forgiveness comes about. I can barely utter the word "forgiveness" now, because there has never been anyone to forgive, and there's no one to do the forgiving. All is already forgiven, whatever it is. We can only go beyond the seeming solidity of all the ideas that we have by resting and realizing that they're already undone. They certainly can't be undone through toying around with them.

Believing that we have to change our thoughts about another person in order to find a resolution to the situation is a total detour. We've tried all of these things: negotiating, forgiving, rationalizing, justifying, analyzing, and so on. Why not instead go for the ultimate negotiation, where there aren't any parties to negotiate! That is the single nondual expanse of peaceful intelligence and freedom—and it's right here! To play around in the swamp of negotiating and justifying is like getting drunk or stoned; it's just another contrived way of adjusting things that avoids the super-completeness of awareness. Just rest in the essence of your own being and let everything be as it is, and you'll know everything that is to be known about everything. Do you want to know a bunch of conventional ideas, or do you want to be able to see as the flawless knower sees?

When we ease into the naturally settled reality of our own being, we rest with all these appearances as they arise. Through resting with all the appearances, a complete compassion for others and ourselves comes about. We see the turmoil we've put ourselves through by making up such big stories about everything we think and feel. It's in

that kind of compassion for ourselves that we have compassion for other people. True compassion can't come about in any other way. If we make amends or direct changes with another person from complete wisdom and love, we'll know what to do and how to act, which is a far better course than relying on pop psychology, psychiatry, self-help books, cultivating positive behaviors, or anything else.

Q: So many negative things have occurred in my life that I feel were beyond my control. I've gotten into a kind of mindset where I expect these negative things to happen, and I find it very difficult to give up this way of thinking.

Candice: If we think, "Certain things have happened to me and things like that are going to keep happening to me," then we're making ourselves a victim of all the points of view we have about ourselves. First we believe we have a personal identity, and then we believe that the well-being of that personal identity is dependent on certain things. We feel dependent on whether we have a good night's sleep and whether we have good dreams and no nightmares, or whether our day is filled with pleasant thoughts, emotions, and activities, or whether people treat us in a pleasant manner or not. We subtly or overtly base our well-being on all these things.

I always recommend that people simply give up their right to be a victim of their points of view. If we keep it very simple, we can say that at any moment in our lives we're either choosing to go with our points of view or we're at rest with them. Rather than getting into all these trips about blaming other people, parents, spouses, or negative events, if we just say, "My points of view are my points of view," then there's no one to blame. It's up to us as to how we respond to the contents of our minds. But if we don't want to make that choice, and

we want to go on with our painful stories, then that's what we choose. In that moment we've chosen to be a victim of our painful stories, and that's just the way it is.

No matter what situation we are in, as long as we are following after points of view, there will be things that we will want to change, and there will be people we like and people we don't like. We will want to get the people we like around us and get the people we don't like away from us. To live in this way means that our life has become a prison. Who made it into a prison? We did! No one else ever makes our life into a prison. It's up to each of us to not become a victim of our thoughts, emotions, and opinions. When we treat our thoughts and emotions as enemies, then we're at war with ourselves, and I think we can all agree that's not a nice situation to be in.

If we are able to rest and not be at war with our thoughts and emotions, we'll no longer collapse into this idea of a "poor me" who is a victim of suffering. In awareness we realize that we're really free of the perception of suffering, even though suffering appears. This is completely beyond what can be understood through dualistic thinking.

Dualistic thinking is based on the idea that either we're suffering or we're not, and that through different strategies, suffering will come to an end. But when we rest as awareness, we find something very different. We find first of all that we can be completely free of our mental afflictions, even as they continue to arise. We find that we're more at peace with all of the mental and physical afflictive states that previously caused us so many problems.

What was afflictive is no longer afflictive. I didn't say that what was afflictive disappears, or we get rid of it, or it goes somewhere else. When we rest as awareness, we no longer see afflictive states as something that can alter our well-being. That's real freedom. In

maintaining unalterable awareness, it becomes more and more obvious to us that what appears in awareness, as it only is awareness, cannot alter that awareness. No matter what appears, it's a vivid appearance of awareness. It doesn't matter whether it's a thought, an emotion, a sensation, a serious bodily illness or injury, or even death. Whatever it is, we know we're going to be okay.

Q: I have real difficulties dealing with the problems of everyday life. I get frustrated and angry when things don't go my way. Can you say something about that?

Candice: Yes, I can illustrate an extreme example of what you've described. If we've trained ourselves to be uptight and tense, and somebody sideswipes us in our car and directs an obscene gesture at us, well, if we have a gun, we might take it out and start shooting! It doesn't have to be that excessive; there can be a variety of responses to the frustration and anger. We might choose to give the other driver the same obscene gesture, or say something threatening, or we might try to sideswipe him in return. The other extreme might be that we're overwhelmed and we break down crying and pull over on the side of the road. "Oh, no, not again! Now my car has been damaged, I can't drive it anymore! Boo-hoo, poor me."

There's a wide range of responses depending on our own temperament or disposition. We can go from one extreme to the other: from being a total victim to being the perpetrator of further violence and assault. To indulge in either extreme is to do violence to ourselves and potentially to others. We've become tense and uptight by training ourselves to have all these responses. When we rest as awareness, we don't need to be a victim or a perpetrator. We give up all our descriptions about who we've taken ourselves to be, and we get

familiar with what's at the basis of it all. In that we have a much more balanced view, and we can say, "Wow, look what I've put myself through most of my life. I thought I had to have all these points of view to prove who I am. But I see now that I'd much rather rest!"

This becomes clearer and clearer. Then we start to see what other people are putting themselves through by believing in all their points of view. We look around at our family members and friends, and we see how much better off they'd be if they were resting as awareness. We're not criticizing, but it's sad to see how people hurt themselves by trying to substantialize their personal identities with points of view.

They may not listen to what we have to say about resting as awareness, but that's okay. That's simply the way it is. It's their choice just like it's our choice. Regarding those who don't want to rest, this isn't an opportunity for position-taking or for us to say, "I'm resting as awareness and you're not!"

We know we're maintaining awareness when we can look at everyone with compassionate eyes, and we don't have to force our opinions on anybody. That's obedience to the unenforceable.

Love and Relationships

Chapter Four

"True relationship comes when we can be with others without being ruled by our points of view. It means living in the oneness we all share, the pure awareness which includes and transcends all differences and sees everyone as its own self."

Our natural state is to love and be loved. However, the only way to truly love is to enter the total love of one's own pure being, and to live in that. It is this love that allows us to accept everything about ourselves just as we are, letting us see the inherent perfection in all that appears without needing to change any of it. When we are in tune with the perfection of our own being, we will see that same perfection in everything, and unconditional love will naturally flow. This is how we are able to truly love ourselves and thereby love others. Until then, all the talk about love is just a story.

Often we look for love by trying to contrive what looks like love, and by arranging loving appearances, but this rarely leads to anything like true love. How can we know what love is unless we're familiar with our own awareness, which is the source of true love? Until we gain confidence in our true nature, we'll have a description or some ideas about love, but never know what love truly is.

Often we try to love by imitating what we think love is, including doing certain things we hope will bring us love. Implicit in this is the hope that others will love us, and the fear that they will not. In that case, the entire relationship is based on hope and fear: we are hoping that love will happen and fearing that it won't. We feel that we're lacking love, and we need the other person to love us so we can get

the love we want. What's more, we make our love conditional upon their love by thinking that unless they love us, and show their love in certain ways, we won't be able to love them. Well, that's a total misunderstanding of what love truly is.

When we begin to gain familiarity with awareness, our relationships with people change, because our relationships become unconditional. Having found wholeness within ourselves, we're no longer looking for someone else to fill a void, and our love will flow from that place of wholeness without needing to ask anything in return.

As we rest, we find in a very natural way that the relationships we've had all along no longer look the way they once did. For example, with our family of origin we may have had a lot of psychological labeling about who did what to whom, and how we ended up being such-and-such because of what they did. When we gain familiarity with awareness, we discover the aspect of ourselves that has never been hurt by anyone or any experience. We then start to see these same people in a new way: "Wow, what do you know—they're just like me!"

When we no longer need to blame anyone, we find tremendous compassion and a connection that we've never had before. Previously we may have felt that we needed something from people, but now we know that we don't. Maybe we thought they owed us something, but now we know they don't. In fact, we don't need anything from anyone to make ourselves whole, for we already are whole.

This principle holds true in all relationships, whether they're long-term intimate relationships or brief encounters we have while walking down the street. We don't require anything from anyone, nor do we need for people to match up with our ideas of who we think

they are or should be, and therefore we're able to see everything and everyone as equal and perfect in their own way. This doesn't mean that we act foolishly; rather, our actions flow from total wisdom. We enter into some situations, and not into others. This happens in an effortless way. We're not locked into fixed ideas like, "That person is bad," or "This is no good," or "I always do this," or "I couldn't possibly do that." We see things clearly as they are, and no matter what happens, we rest, and from rest we know what to do. That is the mastery over the illusion of points of view, wherein all points of view are outshone by awareness. This mastery leads to a joyous and enormously beneficial life.

Until then, life is fraught with uncertainty because of the perceived need to maintain certain relationships, ways of being, and approaches to life in order to feel comfortable and safe. It's only when comfort and safety are thrown completely out the window, and everything is allowed to go pell-mell and helter-skelter, that the natural order of things is recognized and everything is seen to be timelessly free. Only then is true stability gained.

When we're resting as love, we come to see how everything within us is equal and fully pervaded with love. All our thoughts, emotions, and experiences are the equalness of this love. When we know this about ourselves, then we automatically know this about other people, too. We know that they experience the same things we do and are made of the same essence we are. This recognition is very, very important, because it allows us to love in an extremely powerful way without any conditions. When we love ourselves and others in this way, then our relationships are simply about being of benefit to each other. We find there's a free, natural relationality that is entirely

joyous, filled with love, and always fresh. When there's that kind of freedom in a relationship, it's a real delight.

When we become established in awareness, we see how to relate to everyone and everything in an easy and natural way. When we rest with all the circumstantial appearances in our own mind, we come to understand ourselves and others completely. One instantaneous and immediate benefit of that understanding is that we have an intuitive knowledge of everyone else. We see that the people whom we had thought to be wrong, bad, or better than us are really not at all different from ourselves. We come to deeply and compassionately understand others. We can see that just as we had been taking ourselves to be all our points of view, other people have been doing the same thing, and we know how painful that is.

Naturally and spontaneously, we learn to relate to ourselves in a way that's completely easeful and non-harming, and we then know how to relate to others in that way as well. The more we rest as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, the more likely it is that we'll be able to make positive changes in our relationships that might have seemed impossible before. We may have had very acrimonious relationships with others for decades, but through resting, we find that we're looking at exactly the same person who's doing exactly the same thing they've always done that was so irritating, annoying, and just plain wrong—and now none of it matters. We're able to be with them in an easeful way while at the same time knowing exactly what to do and how to act.

When we see who we are, then we see who everyone is, and we feel close to everyone in a natural way. We find that we're willing to be emotionally intimate with others, not out of some kind of contrived effort, but in a very natural way. When there's no need to try to

change oneself anymore, then there's no need to try to change anyone else, even though we may have been trying our whole lives to change other people to make the world all right. Some of us have really been trying to do that, haven't we? However, when we don't need to change people anymore, then we can enjoy them thoroughly, no matter who they are.

In the past we may have been accustomed to forming relationships with partners, husbands, wives, friends, and co-workers based entirely on matching points of view. We think: "These are my points of view; let me know what your points of view are, and if your points of view match my points of view, then we can decide if there's a relationship." Typically we only want to have people who agree with our points of view as our friends. If we decide to get married or partner with someone, not only do we want to have someone who agrees with our points of view, we want someone who *loves* our points of view! However, the infatuation with one another's points of view generally only lasts for a short while. Have you noticed that? After some time we'll want to change their points of view, and they'll want to change ours.

Most of us have seen this played out in romantic relationships, and many people have seen it happen several times over the years! When we first get together with a romantic partner, everything is fantastic. It feels so good. We think there will never be anything better. We feel like we're the luckiest person on earth. We want to be together with our beloved all the time, and we don't want to spend a moment apart. We see our beloved and feel *sure* they're the one for us. No one has ever been so wonderful!

We have all these tremendous feelings coming up in us, and we think it's because of the other person, but that's where our error lies.

We think that this intense love is due to the object of our love, rather than recognizing its source within ourselves. We then run to the object of our love, cling to it, and say, "Be with me forever, and I will feel this love forever!" But what happens? Since we haven't recognized its true source, after some time the love starts to disappear, and because we've attributed the arising of the love to the other person, when it disappears, we blame the disappearance on the other person, and ask them to change in some way. In all likelihood they'll respond by blaming us and asking us to change. Well, this is all just too painful to bear. We usually try to regain the original experience of love somehow, but we find that no matter what we do, it's impossible to regain the intense feelings of love we had in the beginning.

These are very painful points of view, in which we attribute external causes and results to everything that happens. We say to the other person, "Well, I think you need to change." However, what's really behind that is that we want the love to return, and we think their behavior is an obstacle to that. In a kind of ambivalent, mixed-up way we're saying, "If you change, then the love will return. If you stop talking that way to me, or if you'll just put a towel down when you get out of the shower so I don't have to walk through that puddle every time you take a shower, or if you would just peel the potatoes my way instead of your way, then the love will return." We all know what this is like, because we've been through it. This kind of behavior is epidemic, isn't it?

When we look at it in such a clear way, it becomes humorous, but when we're lost in it, it's not humorous at all. Expecting relationships to provide the undying love we seek is really a dead end—whether it's a relationship with an intimate partner or a child, or whoever it might be. The love we seek is already within us; in fact, it

is the fundamental condition of what we are. When we live in the pure awareness that is always present within us, we'll be able to love unconditionally, no matter how our partner or others behave.

We all want to experience this love; somehow we know that it is our birthright. However, if we don't feel it within ourselves, then we'll always be looking for it. We'll look for it in our personal relationships, in the organizations we join, and in the connections we have with the world around us—but because we look outside ourselves, our hopes of finding it are dashed time after time.

We need to recognize that when we fall in love and have that tremendous opening that love brings, the love we're experiencing is not created by an object outside ourselves. That love is our true nature, and it is always within us. To fall in love is a very powerful experience, because it gives us a direct introduction to the true nature of our own being. This is the magical, miraculous thing about falling in love: it introduces us to who we really are. When we fall in love, everything is so great and everyone looks so wonderful. Well, when we rest as awareness that same feeling is available all the time!

When we rest imperturbably, then our clear seeing starts to penetrate everything, and we see that love is not created by something outside ourselves, but is what we are. Forever free awareness has never been made into anything, and yet includes everything. If we relax, the complete indivisibility of everything and the love inherent in it become more and more obvious to us. There's nothing sweeter than effortlessly resting as love, seeing that love in everyone and every experience, and letting perfect love flow through us to all. That is what is offered through the way of rest.

Q: I'm having a lot of trouble relating to my partner who is often so incredibly unreliable and inconsiderate. For instance, three times in a row he failed to turn up for an engagement with me. I sometimes just want to say, "Screw you!" to him and be done with the whole thing! What can I do about such strong negative emotions towards my partner?

Candice: First of all, if you think a thought like, "Screw you!" regarding your partner, remember that it's just another point of view. It's not really a meaningful statement about anyone or anything; it's an ephemeral point of view that's equal to every other point of view. It's not a judgment set in stone; it's a passing wisp of nothing. Like a line drawn in water, it will disappear of its own accord, and the awareness that is the reality of both you and your partner remains unaffected. So, you don't have to beat yourself up about having that thought.

Often people think that when they realize awareness, they'll never have thoughts like "screw you," and they'll never say things like that again. They think their words and thoughts will be always rosy and sweet. But this is just more splintering and fragmenting of everything. All words are completely equal, no matter what they are.

As you begin to rest more and more as awareness, you might eventually have moments when your mind is raging with everything you've ever wanted to say: "You total idiot! I can't stand living with you! I'm going stark-raving mad because of all these things you've done to me!" Or, you might all of a sudden be flooded with every mental picture you've ever had of doing harm to people, or you might have sexual fantasies that you've been trying to hold at bay and never wanted to think about.

All these thoughts could be flashing through your awareness, but to the extent that you're established in rest, you'll be laughing,

because you realize that all of them are completely equal. You may have been trying to selectively hold all these terrible things away from “the pristine niceness of awareness.” Yet, through profound rest, you see that they’re all equal and ultimately have no capacity at all to cause you or anyone else harm or pain. This is the birth of compassion: seeing that all points of view and all conduct are equal opens the floodgates of love, wisdom, and energy. This understanding ensures that we can move beyond a lifestyle of petty emotional reactivity.

A lot of us not only feel victimized by people but also by circumstances in general. We think that certain things are probably going to happen to us that will cause us to suffer, and so we end up creating suffering for ourselves, usually on a daily basis. When we think something is happening to us that makes us suffer, then we are indeed a victim—of our own thoughts! We’ve made ourselves a victim to all these points of view we have about ourselves. First we believe we have a personal self, then we believe that the well-being of that self is dependent on other circumstances: whether people treat us nicely and respectfully, whether they turn up for their engagements with us, and whether events go according to our wishes. We subtly or overtly base our well-being on all these circumstances. But when we begin to enjoy resting in all-encompassing awareness and the wonderful feeling of relief that comes with that rest, then we start to see that we’re not at the whim of anything.

With that, we gain a tremendous indwelling confidence. We know that we’re all right with whatever appears. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a thought, emotion, sensation, serious illness, injury, or even death. Whatever it is, we know we’re going to be okay; we know our true being is changeless, timeless, and forever free. We come to

experience that all points of view that appear within awareness naturally vanish of their own accord, causing no harm and leaving no trace—and that includes the point of view of death. Points of view are their own undoing, and are free in their own place. Nothing needs to be said, done, or noticed about them. In fact there's no one to notice them! There's only awareness with its own appearances. One instant it's the awareness of being somebody, the next instant it's the noticing, and the next instant it's the object being noticed, but all these are merely points of view within awareness. When we gain familiarity with that, then indwelling confidence and certainty come about, and we're able to be in all circumstances without impediment. We find we no longer need to avoid relationships with others, for everyone is seen as equal; we're established in the perfect love that is our true connection with everyone.

Q: I'm interested that you mentioned avoiding relationships, because I feel I do that much of the time. Can you speak a little more about that?

Candice: True relationship comes when we can be with others without being ruled by our points of view. It means living in the oneness we all share, the pure awareness that includes and transcends all differences and sees everyone as its own self. Unconditional love and infinite respect for everyone naturally arise when we rest as awareness. That is real relationship. If we are degrading or demeaning people, ignoring, criticizing, or hating them, gossiping about them, being patronizing towards them, or excluding them—any of these could be considered avoidance of relationship.

Taking our points of view to be real limits recognition of awareness, and this limited recognition of awareness can affect our

relationships with other people. By holding to some points of view and rejecting others, we end up excluding and judging other people. When we rest as awareness, we no longer need to do that. Everyone is included in the limitless circle of our love. In the past, we may have caused harm to others based on holding to our points of view, whether it was with our parents, siblings, friends, extended family, or co-workers. In the Twelve Inquiries Teaching there is a wonderful opportunity to look into how we have been harmful and how we can make direct changes in relationships so that we no longer harm ourselves or others. We see directly how we've used our points of view to avoid relationships with others, and then we commit to making positive changes in those relationships. The Twelve Inquiries are a tremendous support.

Q: I know that these days there's a lot of talk about the unity of humankind and the coming together of all people, and I wonder if you have any thoughts as to whether there can ever be true unity among nations and the various peoples of the world.

Candice: Something that's tremendously important to all of us today is this idea of the unity of everyone. "We're all one" is common parlance these days, and that's good. Lots of songs have lyrics based on it, and lots of people talk about it. Along with that idea, there is also often a belief that there's going to be this special date in the future when the world will experience a dramatic event and everyone will be unified.

We all hunger for this oneness and for world peace; we want it so much. And we don't just want to talk about it; we really want to know the reality of it. We know it's true, we know we're all one, but we want that oneness to come about in our own experience in a permanent and decisive way, rather than just as occasional thoughts,

lines from songs, or warm and fuzzy feelings of oneness which arise for a moment and then rapidly fade and disappear. We want the *real* oneness, the oneness of complete, unbridled wisdom and compassion. We want that to be a lived and direct experience for ourselves.

That oneness can only come about through the power of resting the mind completely for short moments repeated many times until it becomes automatic. This enables seeing the essential equality of everything that appears within our own mind. That's the true oneness we're seeking, and the only oneness there is. There's absolutely no other oneness possible. Since the true nature of the mind is all-encompassing awareness, all phenomena, all circumstances, and all people in the world really exist only within our mind, so when we're established in the truth that all appearances are of the same indivisible essence, that is true oneness. Then, it doesn't matter who we are, where we are, or who we're with. Wherever we are, it's absolutely equal.

There are people who are in prison, facing execution, or being tortured, who are able to maintain complete equanimity even in those extreme circumstances. I've seen this in my own experience in a very traumatic situation. Even though the situation was such that the thoughts and emotions related to the event could have tortured me for the rest of my life, because I was able to rest, there was complete equanimity.

Even in the case of a physical assault, ultimately the perpetrator, the victim, and the crime are all one, as there is no division anywhere. The unified field of awareness, which is our true identity and the true nature of all phenomena, remains unaffected by any event, no matter how horrific it might be. When you're in tune with that oneness, people may attack you and hurl insults at you, and you'll just stand

there with a heart full of compassion; you'll be able to smile and know exactly how to respond in a way that is free of emotionally charged reactivity. At other times, you may do nothing. Who knows what will happen, but you'll know what to do, and whatever you do, it'll be an appropriate action.

All appearances are outshone by the clear light of awareness. Establishment in that awareness provides the optimal power that a human being can ever have. It is this clear light of awareness that sees everything as one—as equal and even—in all circumstances. Then there's a free flow of action that is really non-action, which pours from wisdom in an effortless way, manifesting as true compassion for all beings.

When the ability to rest as awareness is gained by more people around the world, then increasingly, humanity will be able to manifest the unity of all nations and peoples that we all long to see. But there's no need to wait for oneness. It's here right now. Short moments of awareness repeated many times become automatic.

Sex and Desire

Chapter Five

"Whether we are sexually active or not, we are in the perfect circumstance for resting as awareness. Resting as awareness has never been bound by any conventional designations, because awareness is the root of all designations."

A fundamental aspect of the Great Freedom Teaching is complete acceptance of sexuality and the whole realm of the senses. Sexual desire is not something that is other than what is totally pure. In ever-clean awareness, there has never been anything unclean, and there's no part of the body that is unclean. Everything, no matter what, is primordially pure. Whether it is a movement of sexual desire in the body, or thoughts of any kind associated with that, or emotions, whatever they may be—they're all primordially pure. They have never deviated for an instant from the basic space of awareness in which they appear.

Nonetheless, it's important for human beings to make wise choices regarding sexuality and relationships. If we only mix our thoughts, emotions, and sensations together and make a decision based on them, there won't be clear seeing. When we rest, we'll see thoughts, emotions, and desires for what they truly are, and we'll be able to act wisely and in a way that benefits all beings.

If we choose to be sexually active, then everything about that activity—the seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, and smelling—can be experienced as primordially pure and delightful. One can enjoy any activity in which one engages as the free-form play of total purity, total pleasure, and unconditional love without needing to change or

censor anything. That makes an act of intimacy very special and extraordinary. When we rest as awareness, we come to intuitively know about our body and how to take care of our body, and we know about our emotional states and how to take care of them, too. We'll also know how to care for the emotional states of others.

It is incredible to rest as awareness and to get to know about all the points of view we have around desire, whether it's sexual craving or any other form of longing. All expressions of desire are vivid appearances of forever empty awareness. However, if we take them to be something in themselves, then we may end up creating all kinds of stories about them, and we'll find ourselves obsessing about them in one way or another. When we rest as awareness, we have a choice about what we do in life. We no longer feel like we're controlled by all our points of view. When we are established in wholeness and timeless freedom, we're beyond the belief system of cause and effect. We no longer buy into that conventional belief, because we see that the reality of who we are is untouched by cause and effect. It's very, very powerful to get to know ourselves in this way, and when we do, then we understand the power of choice like never before.

I've used sexual desire as an example, because I've never met anyone without sexual desire, but this aspect of choice applies to whatever desire we are dealing with. We all have desires in our lives: for sex, companionship, money, food, housing, success, respect, and so many other things as well. Perhaps in the past we've had a strong desire for something come up in us, such as desire for money, and we felt that we couldn't control ourselves. We had to go and make a lot of money, and even if we succeeded in making a lot of money, we still wanted more. The same is often true with sexual desire; we may have sought more and more sexual experience and never attained what we

thought was full satisfaction. Due to intense sexual desire we may have acted in ways that hurt us and others, and persisted in those behaviors despite the harm they were causing.

Food, money, sex, work, leisure, and relationships—we never seem to have enough of them, and no matter how much we have of any of these, they never fully satisfy our craving for more. Eventually we come to realize that these things never lead to ultimate fulfillment. I'm speaking from shared human experience, in that we all seek a sense of pleasure and satisfaction, but most often we're not able to find it.

Most of us have been taught that sexual desire is something in and of itself, and that it has power over us. We believe in that power, and to a large extent, humanity lives in subservience to the power we have invested in sexual desire. If we consider the problem of overpopulation, many solutions have been proposed, but the world's population continues to increase. There are many population control methods—birth control pills, condoms, China's single-birth policy, and so many other things—but have any of these ever been fully effective? No. Why? Because we love to be sexually engaged with each other! It's a totally natural impulse, and no method of stabilizing population growth can be fully effective as long as it's only a matter of using one point of view to control another point of view.

As a species we haven't yet discovered our inherent ability to be the masters of our desire. For the survival of the human race, it is now vitally important that we understand that this intense biological urge has no independent nature, and that it is merely another point of view appearing and disappearing within the infinite expanse of pure awareness.

This is not to say that we shouldn't be sexually active, but that the expression of the sexual nature needs to come from wisdom, rather than from craving. There is no need to give directions or admonishments for everyone to follow; awareness has its own inherent moral code, for awareness sees itself in all. When we rest as awareness, we'll know what we need for ourselves and what is right for us, and then right action will naturally ensue. We will know what to do in an unerring way without thinking about it, and whatever we choose to do with our sexuality will be beneficial.

When strong desire of any kind arises, the wise approach is to rest as awareness, seeing the desire as awareness, until the desire is directly perceived to *be* awareness. When we're able to do that, this very powerful force of craving will be directly transmuted into the well-being that is the essence of awareness. We don't need to change the thoughts, the desires, or the afflictive states at all. We don't need to push them away or reject them, seek anything in them, or act them out. All we need to do is rest as awareness, and the thoughts and emotions will gradually undo themselves, and in their undoing is revealed complete well-being. Only in this way can we really come to understand everything about ourselves.

This is not a method for eliminating sexual desire or a path to "becoming pure," because everything about us is already primordially pure. To try to neutralize sexual desire or remove it from our being would be to devitalize ourselves and take away the tremendous energy of a potentially beneficial force. We may choose to be celibate or live in solitude, but that shouldn't be an antidote to sexual desire or a way of repressing desire. If we have chosen to be celibate or live in solitude as a means to avoid or neutralize sexual desire, then it's really helpful to rest as the desire and discover the inherently pure and potentially

beneficial energy of desire. If we then want to choose celibacy, that's fine—it's a perfectly valid lifestyle—but it wouldn't be wise to see the neutralization of desire as something that's purer than sexual desire.

Whether we are sexually active or not, we are in the perfect circumstance for resting as awareness. Resting as awareness has never been bound by any conventional designations, because awareness is the root of all designations. When we rest as awareness regardless of circumstance, then we begin to definitively realize that we are not dependent on anything. If we believe we require conditions in order to rest as awareness, then we've instantly created more duality. We may think that we're not going to be a good enough person to know awareness unless we are celibate or chaste, but this is just one more conventional designation.

When we get familiar with ourselves as awareness, then we see everything clearly. We are able, perhaps for the first time, to really be with people in a natural way that is based entirely on caring, concern, and love. When we rest as that love-awareness, then that love starts to inform all of our actions. The more human beings rest as awareness, the more that love and caring will inform everything about human life on Earth, whether in relationships, families, institutions, or the societies we live in.

Q: I want to ask you about casual sexual encounters. Up until now, I would usually have some thoughts and then simply act on them, just to have some fun. At this point I can see more and more that this is not the right path for me. Could you please give me some guidance about how to deal with this habit of indulging in casual sex?

Candice: That's a good question. Sex is of interest to almost everybody, because we're all sexual beings, after all. We have all kinds

of information available these days about our sexual nature and how we should behave sexually, and what our thoughts and emotions should be pre-sex, during sex, and post-sex. We have points of view that are part of popular culture, and there are many moralistic points of view and social injunctions, which vary from culture to culture, and which govern our feelings about our sexual nature. We are told about what kind of sexual desires we should and shouldn't have, and how we should or shouldn't act them out with ourselves and with other people. Unfortunately, many people never truly come to understand their sexual nature beyond these mere conventions.

There's a lot of focus in Western culture in particular on the urge to act. Through successive generations, those urges to act have been liberated from strict moral constraints and have become much more freewheeling. Today people in Western culture start having sexual relationships much earlier in life, and have sexual relationships with many more people during their lifetime.

In my own life, when I was ten or eleven, I hadn't been exposed to MTV or the Internet, as these things didn't exist then. I wasn't thinking about being sexually active with other people, but I *was* thinking about being sexually active with myself. Of course, I wasn't hearing anything about that from *anyone*. Very young people nowadays are exposed to many more kinds of sexual ideas than I was when I was young, but there isn't a wise forum for seeking guidance or a venue to speak openly about the tumultuous thoughts and emotions that go along with those ideas.

The sexual nature awakens in us when we're little babies, and when we innocently start to play with our genitals, we are many times told in no uncertain terms to not do that. Later, when we get to be teenagers and those intense feelings come totally alive, we're told that

those feelings, and the activities associated with them, are to be avoided. So, we have these powerful erotic movements within our bodies, and most of us are told to not explore them with ourselves or with others. There is also a tremendous amount of shame, repression, and avoidance associated with these feelings, thoughts, and fantasies.

The strong movement of sexual energy that comes up for young people is just the energy of initiation into adulthood—that tremendous energy latent within the body which, when aligned with our true being, can be of great benefit to ourselves and others. This energy is most noticeable at that time of life, because it comes when young people are separating out from the confines of the family, and part of that separation is in the form of this tremendous energy to know and express themselves. This energy is occurring spontaneously within a context of all-encompassing perfection and wisdom, but if it's not properly understood, it will not be recognized as such.

We often develop very ambivalent belief systems about our sexual nature, which means that we love it, but at the same time we have all these doubts, worries, and guilt feelings about it. We may have learned that only certain kinds of sexual lifestyles are appropriate. We may have learned that we have to be married in order to have a sexual relationship, and that we should get married and then stay with that person forever, and that sex in that context—and *only* in that context—will be okay. When we're in a sexual relationship, a lot of us think that it has to be a certain way, like for example, that there has to be an orgasm, or it is preferable if both people have an orgasm at the same time, and if that doesn't happen then that's not okay. We may have learned to be troubled by the sexual fantasies we have, or that they have to be of a certain kind or else we'll feel that we've gone beyond what is acceptable.

We might also hear about casual sex, and we might think, “Oh, that sounds *good*, I am going to try that!” but that doesn’t really resolve the conflict either. We still have a great deal of ambivalence, and now we’ve just added casual sex into the mix. Our sexual longings haven’t gone away; they’re always circling around within the same ambivalent belief systems, leaving us unsatisfied and searching for more. This is a big problem for many people these days.

When we learn to rest as awareness, a vast context opens up within us, which allows us to get some breathing room. In rest, we find freedom from the compulsion to act on every desire. As we begin to see the equalness and primordial purity of all appearances, then the moral judgments, fixed ideas, and belief systems we may have held about sex begin to loosen. The more we let go of these strict belief systems, the more we can discover the inherent perfection within our sexuality, and enjoy our sexual nature in such a way that it brings us closer to our truly beneficial nature.

Instead of sex being at odds with what we consider holy, we can discover sex itself to be holy—and a doorway into our own super-complete wholeness. We are then empowered to make wise choices. In a very easygoing and natural way we can decide how any kind of sexual activity will benefit others and benefit us. This lets us be more relaxed in any kind of sexual activity we choose, and this will bring deeper levels of enjoyment, intimacy, and satisfaction for our partners and us.

Without resting the mind completely, we can’t really make wise decisions about sex, food, money, work, relationships, or anything else. The more we sustain awareness, the more likely we are to be very careful and wise about the relationships we enter into, whether they’re sexual relationships or of any other kind. When we rest

profoundly, then, inseparable from that rest is the desire to be of benefit. It's just an innate part of the natural workings of our mind and body. Rather than just entering into situations pell-mell, we relax, take our time, and are much more careful. Before taking any action, we're much more likely to be asking ourselves: "How is this going to affect me, and how is it going to affect the other person?" When we start asking that question at each juncture in our life, we will know that we are really on the right track.

You're a young man, and I've never been a young man myself, but I've heard that young men have a lot of sexual urges. Well, guess what? Women do too! But it's important to understand that these urges are only urges—they're not any kind of command to do anything. Sexual urges do not have an independent nature that can force anyone to act. Maybe this is news to some of us, but sexual urges are not substantial in their own right. Like all other phenomena, they have no power over us. They are simply points of view occurring in awareness.

Many of us learn that our sexual urges have power over us and that we either need to act on them or stop them. However, whether it is the sexual urge itself, or a compulsion to act on the sexual urge, or the drive to stop the urge, all those points of view are equal, and none of them have power of their own. What's needed is to rest as the awareness in which those points of view appear and disappear and find our true power to act there. If we continue to act on every sexual impulse we have, or if we continue trying to control or repress those impulses in some way, then we can never know the real nature of our sexuality or ourselves.

The more familiar we are with the restful essence of all points of view, the more we will recognize them as aspects of awareness. If we

feel that we have to modify or act on whatever comes up, then we can never know the essence of all phenomena, which is awareness itself. It's a really exciting part of the awareness adventure to let our points of view be whatever they are without needing to modify them or act on them.

When we are resting, whatever kind of sexual relationships we have can really become exalted. I don't mean exalted in some sort of corny, over-spiritualized way, but in a very natural, completely profound, and easy way. Sex is meant to be totally natural and enjoyable. If we gain familiarity with resting as awareness, then we will know what we should do. We will be wise, loving, and careful, and our sexual relationships will reflect that wisdom and care.

To allow all points of view to be as they are is so incredibly freeing. Rather than restricting or confining the expression of our sexual nature, resting makes the expression much more spacious and open, in a way that could never have been imagined, conceived, or contrived. When we rest profoundly, there is simply great honor and respect for everyone, including ourselves.

Come to know these wonderful expressions of human living as they are. They are expressions of awareness; they're not something about which we need to feel ambivalent or guilty. All the appearances of awareness are primordially pure. If we rest as awareness while exploring our sexual nature, we come up with a direct and firsthand experience that there really is no division between the appearances and awareness. If we're having sex with someone, we rest as awareness while doing so. Whether we are being sexual with ourselves or someone else, we come to really see that all of these thoughts, emotions, and sensations of the body are truly inseparable from the limitless, primordially pure awareness that is our true nature.

Q: I have been wondering about the role of appropriate limits and boundaries and what my preferences should be in terms of the way that my sexual energy is being used as I rest more and more as awareness.

Candice: It is important to know how to act and what to do in a very natural and uncontrived way. This can only come about with confidence in awareness and its power of wisdom. Once you try to set a "limit" or a "boundary," then you have a whole belief system about limits and boundaries. If you are just resting as the wisdom that is innate in everything, you don't have to build a system to describe it. You rest as awareness, see all as awareness, and from that place of wisdom, let what happens happen. This makes things very easy. If you start to build a language system to describe what is going on, then you will be reading books about limits and boundaries, blogging with people who are into limits and boundaries, and meditating on limits and boundaries. And what will you end up with? Limits and boundaries!

If you just rest in awareness, then you will know what to do. Before I had this shift twenty-six years ago, I didn't know what I should do with my sexual energy. But as I rested as awareness, a profound change in my relationship with sexuality naturally came about of its own accord. That transformation was altogether organic and uncontrived; it had nothing to do with setting boundaries or limits.

When you are resting as awareness, then you are resting as wisdom, no matter what appears. One of the things you learn very quickly is that there are certain appearances that can blindside you; that means you become totally involved in whatever is appearing, and you can't even think about resting. It happens so fast that you don't

know what's happening, and if you're not careful you can be swept away into compulsive action that's not rooted in wisdom. This is very common, and it creates problems for many people.

The Great Freedom Teaching has a system of support 24/7 to help when such moments occur, and this comes in the form of the Four Comforts: resting naturally as awareness, the teacher, the Teaching, and the community. Great Freedom's Twelve Inquires is a thirteen-day Teaching that is specifically designed to show you in detail what your points of view are, so you will be able to see in advance where you are likely to be blindsided. Most human beings have areas where they are easily blindsided, such as sex, food, money, relationships, leisure, power and work. These are very natural parts of human life. When we clearly see how those desires play out within us, and we find the wisdom that is indestructible and unaffected by desire or any other viewpoint, then it makes it much easier to rest as awareness. When you have carefully examined your points of view, and have found support in resting, then instead of being blindsided, you can just keep on resting, 24/7, without trying to do so. This is extraordinarily helpful.

A Balanced View

Chapter Six

"All kinds of seemingly opposing things can come up—illness, death, disaster, terrorism, praise, success, and joy. Great equanimity means being at ease in the face of all these appearances. When nothing can affect our well-being, then we truly have a choice in life."

From the vantage of resting as awareness, we have an all-encompassing view, with which we can see things as they truly are. From an airplane flying at 30,000 feet we can see with a completeness that's not possible from the ground. In a similar way, from the all-embracing vision of awareness, we have a much broader outlook regarding all experience. We see that there's no need to hold to any point of view whatsoever, because all points of view are completely equal. The capacity to see things in that way is called "the balanced view."

Awareness and all the points of view contained within it are a single, joyful, nondual expanse. Even though points of view appear within awareness, awareness remains as it is—unchanged by whatever appears and never having been made into anything. One experiences the balanced view through clear seeing that is completely wide-open, spacious, and carefree in every moment. This view provides the capacity to choose among the many different options that are available and to understand which will be the most beneficial to all beings.

No matter how any appearance is described, it is timelessly free and unobstructed. When we return again and again to awareness as the basis of everything that appears, then more and more we have

complete equanimity regardless of what's happening. With the freedom of complete perceptual openness in the direct encounter with any appearance, we see that appearances have never taken hold. If there is an arising of a strong appearance—like panic for example—we see that the panic and the complete ease of being are not two, just like thought and no-thought are not two. When we rest repeatedly, then less and less can we see two anywhere.

In resting imperturbably for short moments many times, equanimity becomes all-pervasive, night and day. All kinds of seemingly opposing things can come up—illness, death, disaster, terrorism, praise, success, and joy. Great equanimity means being at ease in the face of all these appearances. When nothing can affect our well-being, then we truly have a choice in life.

Rather than training our minds to always take a position or have an opinion about what appears, we rest with the great equality of everything. The more we rest as that, the more there will be a naturally occurring warm sense of well-being that pervades everything. Things that once ruffled our feathers won't ruffle them anymore.

This isn't just some abstract philosophy that we read about in a book and then memorize. Rather, it's a decisive experience that expresses itself in a practical way in our lives. No matter what the descriptions are, they all have their basis in the primordial purity of everything just as it is. If we are looking for a description, why not that one? It's very important for all of us as human beings to come together in this relaxed way, where we can look each other straight in the eye without needing to drag along all our descriptions of past, present, and future.

What do we really want? Do we want to have a big pile of beliefs, or do we want the relief that's at the basis of everything? No matter who we are and how negative our circumstances might be, and whether we've done horrible things in our lives or great things, we can get to know the fundamental nature of reality and return to that again and again.

So, if we hear that our lover doesn't want to be with us anymore, or that we have a terminal illness and that we are going to die, or suddenly we're faced with some other very challenging situation, when the relaxed naturalness of our own being is understood as the basis of all appearances, then we're able to be in all these situations without impediment.

Q: Would this great equanimity apply for you in an extreme situation? To compare, say, the birth of your child with the death of your child, would those two be equal?

Candice: At the deepest level, yes, they would be. "Great equanimity" doesn't mean that one is thoughtless or emotionless. It means that all appearances are seen as equal and that the basis of appearances is equanimity. It's not like taking a big band-aid of equanimity and applying it when bad situations occur. The nature of awareness is to be resting in complete equanimity, so that whatever appears, that equanimity is present as the appearance. The force of ever-present awareness is present in and as the appearance without distraction. Awareness is not an observer of something else; it pervades the single nondual expanse of equalness.

Q: So could that equanimity include the emotion of joy at birth and grief at death?

Candice: Absolutely.

Q: It doesn't exclude the feeling of sorrow or grief?

Candice: Not at all. It's equally embracing and all-inclusive and allows the free rein of everything.

Q: That's hard for me to understand.

Candice: Yes, it can't be understood with the intellect. It's completely beyond thinking or doing anything about it to try to make it come about. When we rest as that which is the source of joy and grief, birth and death, then we have complete freedom.

Q: How can I rest while being in pain?

Candice: When in sickness and in pain, rest as the essence of that sickness and pain. The essence of everything, even sickness, is awareness. Rather than jumping out of rest and trying to describe everything that's going on, and then worrying about what's going to happen or whether you're on the right course of treatment, continue to rest as the essence of that sickness—even though it may seem difficult to do so. That's the greatest chance you have of healing yourself. When you rest in the already healed well-being that is the essence of the sickness, that's the best medicine!

Looking at the experience of pain in a practical way, we can see that when there is acute pain, like say, when we have a severe headache, usually the sensations of pain are in fact fleeting. It may seem like we've had a bad headache the whole day, but when we rest as awareness, we start to realize that there are lots of different sensations that go with having a headache, and that they come and go. There isn't a headache absolutely present every single instant. There are gaps, and there are also different descriptions of the pain, such as low, moderate, or intense. As we rest, we just become much

more aware of how these descriptions come into being, and we also find that they no longer rule us as they once did.

As we get older we may have a lot more disturbing things going on with our bodies. A lot of you are young, but listen up, because I'm a little older! Just sit here for a minute and notice every little ache and pain you have. By the time you're my age, those aches and pains will be many orders of magnitude greater! If you haven't gained confidence in the great equanimity of awareness, then any of the disturbances you have within you now are going to be even more exacerbated. You probably don't think about the end of your life or dying very much because you're so young, but when you get to be in your late fifties, then the horizon gets closer, and you know that the body is going to start falling apart. Rest without describing; this will resolve things that may come up for you, either now or later in life as you are aging.

Q: I'm presently in the process of leaving a community with which I've had a long affiliation, and I'm being criticized greatly by the people for my decision. When I didn't respond to their criticism at first, they then started being even more vehement in their condemnation. It may be because I've begun resting that the criticism hasn't stung me as much as it would have earlier.

Candice: Sometimes when we've been around a group of people who are accustomed to seeing us react in a certain way, they'll have a certain expectation about how we'll respond when they criticize us. However, when we don't respond in the expected way, they may feel the need to up the ante. "Well, if we can't get her going with these things, let's try something even harsher!" Some people will love us and say lots of nice things, and other people will dislike us and say all

kinds of cruel, nasty, mean things, but whatever way it is, that's just the way it is. It's all timelessly free.

Now, regarding the situation you're describing, it's really amazing. At one time, if you had heard negative things about yourself, you would have found it very difficult to bear. You might have ended up totally devastated, but now here you are feeling quite at ease about the whole circumstance! There's no need to react or respond in any way. One goes about one's business, whatever it is. Whatever appears, just let it be. Whatever happens, just rest. Equanimity is the ability to be at ease in all situations without impediment, including situations where you're being criticized unfairly!

Q: I find it very disturbing to watch the news on TV, because the things one sees can be so horrible. But even if I avoid watching the news media or reading newspapers, I'm still around people who do, and they're always talking about these disturbing things, and I find that my mind becomes so unsettled. Is there anything I can do about this?

Candice: Just relax and take care of yourself as you are. It doesn't matter what people shout and scream about. Whatever the newspapers, television, or the movies are shouting and screaming about, it's all a fantasy world. It can't affect us unless we let it do so. If we're watching the television news and getting all whipped up into the negativity that's so prevalent there, then that's our choice. But if we just watch all of what comes before us, and we completely relax with no need to hold on to any of these descriptions, we get to know who we really are. Nothing can disturb the peace inherent in our true nature.

I live in a small beach town in California, and every year someone comes down at low tide and builds an incredibly intricate sculpture out of sand. It has every detail and nuance of the most elaborate statues you'd ever see in marble or gold, and great care is taken for many, many hours in building it. Then slowly and relentlessly the tide comes up and totally washes away this beautiful work of art.

Similarly, no matter what appears, it will change and eventually vanish naturally. The law of impermanence applies to everything. What hasn't appeared yet, will appear, and whatever appears will disappear. The things that were going on at one time have all vanished, and now there are other things appearing. The whole world could blow itself up in an instant, but indestructible awareness would still be, so why not get familiar with that? When you know that, where is the need for fear?

Q: With all the things going on, especially since 9/11, I feel a great deal of anxiety on a regular basis. I've heard about being comfortable with insecurity, but what would you suggest when one feels overwhelming fear about what might happen?

Candice: The unpredictable, magnificent display will just do what it will, and so we might as well relax and enjoy the ride, because we really never know what is coming next! No matter how safe we think our country is, we don't know what's around the corner. A threat could come in any form—an attack on our country, political or religious persecution, social injustice, an earthquake, civil war, our own death, or someone else's death.

Whatever happens, happens. But when we rest as awareness, we can just let it happen! We don't need to think, "Oh no, I don't want this to happen. I want my life to be different!" Well, if missiles are

landing around us and other countries are invading, guess what, we won't be able to change that. We might as well know how to rest as awareness, because then we'll have peace of mind no matter what's happening outside. Then we'll know what to do in the situation, and we'll be able to respond from wisdom, rather than freaking out and getting all involved in our emotional states.

I can cite the example of the Tibetans who were unexpectedly and suddenly invaded by the Chinese. Once Tibet was occupied, many of them were executed, or imprisoned and tortured, and those who tried to flee had to face overwhelming suffering. Yet, because resting naturally has long been a very important practice in Tibet, quite a few Tibetans had attained the ability to rest naturally under all circumstances, and they were able to respond with great wisdom, skill, and courage during and after the invasion.

Believe me, anything can and will happen. If we're living our life based on points of view, then it's going to be very difficult and painful for us when those unexpected things occur. However, if we're resting as awareness, then we're able to see it all as an incredible display. Instead of all the experiences of life being enemies or something that we have to be afraid of, we see everything as an ally. Recognizing appearances as supportive of awareness is a way of committing to awareness. It means that we say to ourselves, "I'm going to acknowledge awareness as the fundamental ground of my being. That's what my life's about, and I'll never give up!" What does "never giving up" mean exactly? It means that no matter what happens, the emphasis is going to be on awareness rather than on the appearances.

Q: I heard you mention in a talk on the Internet about the fact that at some point in our spiritual practice, everything could just sort of blow

up, and that we might have a really tumultuous time where all of our thoughts would be going crazy. Could you explain more exactly what it is you're speaking about?

Candice: If we've been intense spiritual practitioners for some time, we may think that all of the negative thoughts and emotions have been renounced or left behind. We may think that we're beyond them, and that if such things appeared in our minds it would represent a regression for us. However, as long as we're thinking in that way, we're avoiding the timeless freedom of awareness.

At some point we have to be able to leave all the position-taking behind, throw away the meditation cushion, and throw away all philosophies—including our own philosophies! It's then that the great equanimity comes about. When we're able to see everything as absolutely equal and give up our habit of trying to repress and control the contents of our minds, that's the moment when—*boom*—everything that we've been trying to hold at bay comes rushing in.

There may be a point, no matter how much practice we've done, when the shit is going to hit the fan, so to speak! Every great being who's ever achieved the potent powers of the clear light of wisdom says the same thing: no matter how long we sit on our cushion in meditative absorption, eventually everything's going to fall apart. We see this happening very publicly with many important figures in the spiritual world today, don't we? All of a sudden these internal upheavals have happened, and many of them weren't prepared.

It may be that all kinds of crazy thoughts will occur to us, and we can't believe we're having these kinds of thoughts. All the things we've been pushing away—such as sexual fantasies and so forth, that we're sure can't be included in spiritual practice—will all come flooding

in. Even if we've gotten into some kind of extreme state, like emptiness, no-self, no-thought, impartiality, or neutrality, and we've been able to hold on to that state for a long time, suddenly these thoughts can start bombarding us, and then the state we've been holding onto will be gone.

Now that's a very graphic description, isn't it? Despite all our attempts to control the contents of our mind by neutralizing negative states, suddenly there isn't any control. Everything's flying all over the place! But then what? If we're prepared in that moment to handle it on our own, to rest as awareness, and let the appearances come and go, then there will just be great laughter! This is described in all of the great traditions: the indestructible, unchanging laughter that comes from the recognition of everything as it is. We'll see that everything is equal and there is nothing to fear in any appearance. The awareness underlying pious thoughts and lustful, hateful thoughts is identical. It is in realizing the great equality of all appearances that the true warmth of uncontrived compassion is unleashed. It remains hidden until the equalness of all appearances is realized.

You won't be able to predict what will happen in these upheavals, but when they come, you'll either know what to do or you won't. If you've have good instruction, then you'll be prepared, and you can just be with it and laugh. If you don't know what to do, then it's time to rely on your teacher, because that's what teachers are for. They are there to support you in these frightening moments when the whole system of the mind begins to crumble. They're going to know what's happening when all the confines of concepts are completely shattered. Many of us have heard of the letting go of belief systems and assumptions and the shattering of all concepts. Well, this is what the shattering of all concepts means. It isn't like taking a teensy-

weensy hammer and smashing the word “concepts.” It’s wild, energetic, free, and beyond anything that could ever be imagined. So, if this hasn’t occurred for you, get ready by gaining confidence in awareness!

Skillful Means

Chapter Seven

"I have found conclusively in my own experience that love always brings about the most fruitful results. Love needs no other means—love alone is the most sublime and skillful of means. One could say that love is the ultimate skillful means for creating peace and well-being in our lives, in our communities, and on the Earth."

What I'm interested in is the down-to-earth expression of awareness that genuinely benefits people. I'm not interested in mere philosophy that has no practical application, nor am I interested in writing great treatises that no one can understand. I'm interested in sharing what's most essential and valuable in life in a very direct and practical way so that people all over the world will be helped. I'm interested in daily life as it's lived by people everywhere with beating hearts and breathing lungs.

Teachers can only teach in an authoritative and persuasive way if their teaching is based on their own lived experience; mere theoretical or hypothetical knowledge doesn't have the power to transform. It's very, very important to know the distinction between instruction that's based on the teacher's direct experience and instruction that's merely theoretical. When a teacher's wisdom is clearly and directly communicated, then people who are open, ready, and interested in that wisdom can quickly recognize and realize it in themselves. A teacher who has the direct experience of resting imperturbably will be able to use the skillful means inherent in awareness to introduce a student to a direct experience of awareness.

There are many teachers and teachings all over the world, and the use of skillful means can take many different forms. Skillful means

may appear stern or severe in certain circumstances—or graceful and kind in other circumstances. However, if their use is entirely based in awareness, their application will be unerring in any given situation.

A teacher who has realized the basic goodness of awareness can easily recognize the points of view of those who have come to them for instruction—even the subtlest points of view, about which the individuals themselves may not be aware. In helping people move beyond those points of view, some teachers work in ways that sometimes seem very harsh, but that isn't the approach taken in Great Freedom. We've found another way that works incredibly well, and that is the way of love.

Of course, love can take many forms. Even if a teacher's speech is fiery in its expression, if it is offered in love, then it can be received as love, if the student has the willingness to do so. If a direct message needs to be delivered that has some bite to it, the love can be so evident that the bite won't even be noticed. The message will be undeniably loving, even though it might look like a fireball! Love such as this is always wildly compassionate, and it always maintains a wholesome connection with everything and everyone, everywhere.

Love overcomes all. I knew this even before I had this incredible shift twenty-six years ago. As a mother raising three children, it was impossible for me to ever demean or spank them. I knew that I only wanted to love them unconditionally. Of course, as their mother I could see where they needed to change their relationships to their points of view, but there was a way to do that without engaging in hurtful behavior. I have found conclusively in my own experience that love always brings about the most fruitful results. Love needs no other means—love alone is the most sublime and skillful of means. One

could say that love is the ultimate skillful means for creating peace and well-being in our lives, in our communities, and on the Earth.

In teachings and communities based on love and made up of people who are devoted to realizing their true nature, genuine warmth and caring are always in evidence. When new people come to such a community, they are welcomed with kindness and warm-heartedness. There is no false hierarchy or attempts to exclude or isolate anyone. In a community of people, such qualities come from the tremendous love manifested by the teacher and the members of the community itself. These qualities are the product of a great resolve to embody love and to live in love, and to never stray from that ideal. That love is the teacher's primary skillful means.

As people live and grow, they gain a certain self-identity by being exposed to the points of view of their family and community. We all have ingrained ways of living that are usually modeled on what we have seen in other people. We've taken ourselves to be our points of view, and we've taken others to be their points of view, and this creates duality, judgment, and suffering. However, when we meet people who are resting as awareness without being distracted by points of view, we suddenly realize within ourselves, "Wow! They're not focusing on their points of view, and I don't have to either!" This is one example of what it means to be introduced to awareness, and this can come through direct contact with a teacher or through contact with a community where restful awareness is in full evidence.

Through maintaining awareness, we come to see that the conventional identity we've taken ourselves to be is not our true identity. We grow more familiar with the wisdom identity that is naturally present and complete in itself. When the teacher's skillful

means and wisdom are fully present, this wisdom identity can easily and expertly be revealed to others.

When we begin to discover this whole new way of being, we might feel a bit disoriented at times and may not always know how to act at first. But then, through sustaining awareness for short moments repeated many times, wisdom gradually begins to manifest, together with the skillful means to be totally relaxed and competent in all situations. We'll have a totally relaxed mind and body in all situations whether or not thoughts are present.

In living a life based on the ongoing recognition of everyday awareness, there is a supreme boldness in every moment. There aren't any scripts for the way one's responses to life will unfold. Whatever one says is said without forethought and with no need to worry. We no longer waste our mental and emotional energy on thoughts such as, "Oh, what are they going to think about me?" or "How is this going to make me look?" because there's no referencing back to a personal identity. There's just an effortlessly relaxed natural presence and the supreme boldness of speaking authentically.

One is able to spontaneously respond to everything in an effortless way, because there's no longer any fear based on anxious anticipation. Many people find that their fears just drop away. It's seen so clearly that fear is nothing but a passing point of view within awareness, and as such has no independent nature and no meaning of its own. It's actually just a form of pure awareness itself—an ephemeral, vivid appearance within the timeless wisdom that is our true nature. Whatever comes up is seen to be perfect as it is, and the proper response arises naturally, no matter how challenging the situation may be.

For a person who is resting imperturbably, no merit or virtue need be accumulated, for neither of these applies to what is already super-complete. An authentic or pure teaching never veers from this conclusion and never adds anything that requires improvement of a flawed self. It asserts that there is only one self, and it is limitless, indivisible, timelessly free, and inherently perfect. It doesn't say that we must develop merit or virtue or perform different activities in order to be pure enough to understand and realize our true nature; it says our true nature is already realized! Furthermore, the authentic, direct teachings say that there is only one method, and that is to rest as awareness in a completely uncontrived way until it becomes automatic. This may be stated in more than one way, but the essence of the teaching is always the same. The ideal disposition of a person who wants to rest as awareness is to simply be open enough to listen to the teachings and to practice resting as awareness on an ongoing basis. That's all; it's really no big deal.

In many paths, preliminary practices are recommended to cultivate merit and virtue and to bring about a purification of body, mind, and spirit. However, it is essential for us to know what their exact purpose is, for without the correct understanding, such practices can be a detour. The true purpose of any practice is to reveal flawless, stainless wisdom. Once that occurs, wisdom body, wisdom speech, wisdom mind, and wisdom qualities and activities will all be naturally present. There's nothing to be purified, so the true purpose of preliminary practices is to show that everything about our body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities is already and forever flawlessly pure. When the teacher's skillful means and wisdom are such that this can be clearly and directly communicated, then the inherent purity of

everything becomes obvious very quickly to people who are interested and open.

Some people might think that they have to go to India or Tibet or some special holy place in order to find the proper circumstance to be at peace. However, wherever we go, there we are! We carry our points of view with us, and they will create our experience no matter where we may be. What's needed is complete perceptual openness in all experience, and that can be found anywhere. To say that one experience or place is better than another is to cut ourselves off from true skillful means and wisdom. To say that some things are better and some worse is just a conventional idea, and conventional ways of approaching life need to be looked at with a discerning eye, because they're unlikely to lead to real freedom or peace.

The absolute simplicity of everything as it is, is completely uncontained by any philosophical constructs or frameworks. When we hear about how great and exalted we are as human beings, a door is opened, and when we walk through that door, there's no turning back. There is nowhere to go back to, and no one to go back. We say, "Wow, what I've found within myself is so amazing!" and we naturally want to share the ease and well-being we've found with everyone. It's this complete ease of being inherent in resting as awareness that brings an incredible shine to the skin and a smile to the face. We cheer up!

If we expose ourselves to unerring instructions that are precise and specific—with even the slightest bit of an open mind, coupled with the commitment to returning to rest—we'll come to recognize the fully evident nature of our own self. *It's very important to have unerring instruction that quickly brings about the decisive experience of the true nature of our own being.* Unerring instruction leads to the swift accomplishment of timeless awareness and the dawning of the powers

of potent benefit. The instruction I'm speaking about here is not the conventional worldly knowledge. I'm speaking about the awareness that appears in the mind stream of certain individuals at a certain time and provides a teaching that is absolutely perfect for those living in that era. This teaching rapidly leads to the dawning of awareness and is always spoken in a language that people of that era can easily understand.

With this teaching, there's no effort to be made and no tricks or gimmicks to be employed. All one need do is rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times until it becomes obvious at all times. That's it. There's no need to do anything else or rely on anything else. In resting we finally find what we had sought through all the practices we've ever done. No matter what we may have been seeking from various practices or activities in the world, we'll find the true happiness and well-being we're looking for in resting as awareness.

Q: I know that in many traditions the guru's grace is one of the most important blessings offered to a disciple. Is the guru's grace something that you think is important to seek out or wish for?

Candice: When we rest completely, we abide as grace. What is most important is to get a firsthand experience of the grace of complete rest. One meaning of "guru" is dispeller of darkness. The way to make best use of the guru or teacher is to rest as the clear light of awareness in which both you and the teacher appear. Awareness is the guru's true form.

If we want to be totally devoted to the guru or teacher and not spend a moment away from her or him, we can do that, but it's not necessary, and not everyone will want to do that. There are many

beliefs and practices that may have been very successful in the past, but which just aren't working in the same way anymore. It's up to us to discover new ways of culling the essence from those traditional practices and then to apply that essence in ways that work in the modern world. When we hear a term like "guru's grace," it means different things to different people depending on their points of view. There are many people today who, when they hear the word "guru" or anything about having a guru or relying on the guru's grace, are going to immediately run in the opposite direction!

However, if we talk about getting ongoing support from the teacher and the teaching, this is something people can more readily understand. To rely on the support of a teacher is actually the same as taking refuge in the guru's grace, but "relying on the support of a teacher" is an expression that may be more inviting to people. Whatever is being offered, it's important that it be available to everyone. The true guru's grace is universal and touches everyone impartially, and to allow that grace to reach people all over the world is more important than anything else. There is wisdom and skillful means in using language that a majority of people can easily relate to.

Q: I know that I should have compassion for people who do things that harm themselves and others, but at the same time, I think I should at least point out to them how their behavior is affecting other people. What's the best approach to doing this?

Candice: When we come to see that all of our own appearances are nothing but awareness, then we naturally find compassion for ourselves and for everyone. Compassion never needs to be cultivated or developed; it's inherent in awareness and can only be found in awareness. If it's cultivated, then it may just be a contrivance. When

we discover true compassion in ourselves through resting as awareness, we find that it arises in us naturally, so we don't have to get it from anywhere. With that discovery we're able to see clearly what other people are thinking and feeling. We can see where they are holding on to points of view, and we know how painful that is. In the situation you described, one approach might be to directly point out the person's faults, but uninvited advice is often not very helpful. You could walk up and say, "Hey, I see what's going on with you, and I'm going to tell you about it!" However, in Great Freedom we haven't found that to be a particularly effective method.

If people ask me for help and invite me to look into their points of view with them, then I'll do that, but otherwise I don't intrude in that way. There are much easier and more useful ways to help someone than pointing something out without having first been asked to do so. When we get familiar with the awareness at the basis of everything, there are many skillful means of opening up a place of receptivity in people. For instance, we can patiently and lovingly be with the person, accepting them as they are. This often helps loosen up things in them, and a place of rest appears where before they had only been clinging to points of view. When that occurs, they'll naturally be more prepared to look objectively and openly at themselves and their behavior.

If I see something in someone that I think they might need help with, rather than speaking to the person individually, I might just speak about the situation they are facing in a talk to a group in which they are included—knowing that the person in question will hear what I have said. Afterwards, I can always tell whether the person has heard it properly and taken it in. This way, all the people listening can benefit from the instruction, because we all share so many of the same

points of view. In this particular method, we are all indivisible, but no one is invisible!

There are plenty of people who are ready to rest and who want support in doing so, and those people will probably be open to hearing what you have to say. However, if you speak to those who are ambivalent or not interested, then you'll probably find only resistance, and it's quite likely that neither you nor they will benefit from the conversation. Using discrimination in who you speak to just makes things so much easier. Rest is best. Just relax!

Q: Are there ways that instruction can be given by teachers where the student may not be aware that they're actually receiving a teaching?

Candice: Yes, teaching happens on many levels and in many ways. I know some Tibetan yogis who have magnificent powers of great benefit and who are characterized by their great joy and total simplicity. Another significant characteristic they have is that they will use any method necessary to help people wake up. With them, anything goes! Some people call this approach "crazy wisdom." One of their main teachings is that everything should be seen as being equal and that one should be imperturbably at rest in all experiences. This aspect of their teaching is identical to what is being taught here in Great Freedom.

Some thirty years ago a young American woman went to live in a cave with these Tibetan yogis to learn their wisdom. She didn't know any Tibetan, and they were helping her learn the language, but all along they were also finding ways to teach her about the equalness of all things. At some point in her training, something interesting happened. She wanted to go shopping, but she didn't know the word for "bread" in Tibetan, so she asked what that word was. Instead of

giving her the proper word for bread, these yogis gave her the Tibetan word for “penis”! When she went to the market, she innocently pointed at a loaf of bread and said to the shopkeeper, “I’d like to buy a penis, please.” Well, imagine the reaction! The yogis were demonstrating the true skillful means and humor that shatter the confines of points of view.

The skillful activities of the teacher and community support us in realizing the great equalness of all appearances. This we can count on without fail.

A New Way of Being

Chapter Eight

"When we get familiar with that which is aware of all these concepts—yet remains untouched by any concepts—then we place ourselves directly in the position of being, which isn't a position at all. Being does not have an address or location."

In any era in which human beings have lived, there have been people who have yearned to understand life in a profound way. However, as long as anyone is trying to understand life within the context of thought alone, they will never be able to grasp the unknowable essence that is beyond thought. If people are only experiencing life through the different modalities of thought, the unknowable will always remain beyond their grasp.

To believe that our intelligence is comprised only of our thoughts and emotions is really very primitive, and this assumption limits the understanding we can have about our intelligence. If we believe that intelligence is a byproduct of a biological creation called a human being, then we will be limited by that belief system. The assumption is, "I am intelligent because I have a human body; I'll have this intelligence as long as I am alive, and at death that intelligence will no longer exist."

When we are locked within these mental structures, we will always be referring whatever happens back to our individual selves. Everything is seen as occurring to a "me," as the subject within a subject-object relationship. Even if we're dealing with other so-called subjects, we will actually be seeing them as objects. The other people in the world are objectified and appraised as to how they will be

beneficial to us or not beneficial to us, and we'll look at everything as somehow having the power to affect our thoughts and emotions.

Why should we be limited to a scenario that contends that we are separate, individual subjects? Why should we assume that the subject-object relationship absolutely exists, and that reality is made up of matter and can be described by perceptions? Looking at everything as solid and existing in its own right is one way of looking at things, but it's not likely to reveal our true nature. It would be like looking only at one tiny piece of a gigantic puzzle, and trying to assess the whole puzzle from that one piece.

If we want to know the essence of life and intelligence, then we have to get familiar with their flawless knower. When we get familiar with that which is aware of all these concepts—yet remains untouched by any concepts—then we place ourselves directly in the position of *being*, which isn't a position at all. Being does not have an address or location. Awareness may be experienced within the human body, but the human body is not the source location for awareness. Awareness is universal—in fact, it's beyond the universe; it's the basic space in which the entire universe appears.

When we talk about anything at all—life, intelligence, experiencing, being—we must know what is actually *aware* of all those things. Awareness is the flawless knower that is aware of everything; it's inseparable from the ground intelligence of everything. This ground of being is aware of all points of view, all belief systems, and assumptions, and sees all points of view as itself. This ground of being is what is seeing, knowing, explaining, describing, experiencing, and being.

We may have accepted a belief system that we are a subject that is perceiving objects, but when we just relax and examine *what's*

looking, then we see that there is only awareness encompassing all of these points of view. That awareness is the basis of what we take ourselves to be. When we become familiar with the ground of being, then we see everything *as it is*. We see the wide range of reality as it is, without any investment in trying to pin down reality as being any one thing. We see every appearance as temporary and fleeting, and less and less is there a fixed stability to everything. When we become familiar with awareness as the ground of everything, then our range of experience is radically altered.

If we acknowledge our thoughts and emotions over and over again as being significant in their own right, then we'll be ignoring the basis of the thought itself, which is awareness—the ground of being. It's always present, but we don't notice that it's there. However, if we simply rest as the equilibrium of what's looking, then we can allow all the unpredictable thoughts and emotions to be whatever they are, without getting overwhelmed by their apparent significance.

We drain ourselves of our life energy when we persist in holding to the importance of something that doesn't have an independent nature. Whether we label impressions of the mind as "anger" or "joy" or "good" or "bad," they all appear in the same basic space of awareness, and are made only of that space.

We want to go right to the source of what's looking, rather than looking for something outside ourselves. As long as we're constantly seeking—rather than resting as what's looking—for that long we won't find it, because it's what's looking that is wise.

Many of us have spent much of our lives seeking in one way or another. We may have been seeking answers, seeking relief from suffering, or seeking some sort of mental freedom. We may not have even described it as "seeking," but we felt somehow that there was

something more to be had or known. No matter how we have expressed this seeking, it all comes down to that urge to freedom. In fact, every single moment of our life is an expression of the urge to freedom. We have a great urgency within everything that we think, feel, and do, and that urgency is none other than the urge to absolute freedom. That is always what we're looking for, but unless we know how to truly relax our mind, we'll never have more than a few fleeting moments of freedom in our lives.

Even the most violent and heinous actions are in fact expressions of this same urge to freedom. People are all looking for ways to relieve their anxiety in all that they do and think. We've learned through long practice to take our thoughts, emotional states, and experiences to be real and substantial. As a result, we try to find the thoughts, emotions, and experiences that will give us relief—however confused the attempt may be. For most people, though, the attempt to relieve anxiety never really works. At best, the attempts only neutralize points of view, but don't give any sustained feeling of freedom or relief. This is why so many people end up feeling frustrated and confused.

Even the spiritual search, for the most part, is entangled with attempts to change one point of view into another, and the result is that the seeker can't really recognize any freedom in the seeking. However, in resting as awareness all conventional frameworks are gone beyond. The Great Freedom Teaching reveals that nothing about our points of view need be changed; there is just the basic space of awareness, the natural order of everything that sees through all conventional frameworks.

We've tried to get out of our negative thoughts and into positive thoughts. We've tried to get out of our negative emotions and into

positive emotions. We've tried to get out of our negative experiences and into positive experiences. We've tried to get out of our negative relationships and into positive relationships. The intent of what we call spiritual seeking is usually to try to get into some kind of a state and get out of an opposing state. Right? And as long as we're trying to get into a certain state and get out of another state, whether we call it spiritual seeking or anything else, we're simply shuffling back and forth.

Now, the key distinction between this and the Great Freedom Teaching is that by the power of resting as awareness, what we're looking for is immediately revealed. In other words, relax everything you take yourself to be, relax all ideas of who you think you are, and (*snaps her fingers*) it's just right here.

The ground of pure awareness that has never been opposed by anything is known only in that complete relaxation. You can call it the universal ground, or conscious intelligence, pure intelligence, or awareness; it's the unopposed ground of everything that is. When we rest as that, then we see that it knows itself. We find that the ground of being is self-knowing. All phenomena are in fact the self-knowing of the unopposed ground.

In a very practical way, we can bring that understanding into our own experience by just resting as awareness for short moments, many times, until it becomes automatic. And what does that mean? It means that whatever our thoughts are, whether they're describing emotions, sensations, experiences, people, places, things, or whatever they are, we repeatedly relax for short moments until that relaxed ground of being becomes obvious at all times. It's as simple as that.

This is absolutely the most powerful instruction about living that can ever be practiced. That is enough. *Nothing else is needed.*

And so, when a thought appears in awareness, just relax, without any effort whatsoever to correct what appears. In this way, you will soon come to know that everything that appears exists only within awareness. I don't mean awareness as the human phenomenon, but awareness as the center and matrix of the universe.

Awareness is pristine, spacious, and clear like the cloudless sky, and therefore the nature of all thoughts, emotions, and experiences is also sky-like and infinite, for they appear within awareness and are made only of awareness. When we rest as awareness, we're able to see that.

Everything within the vast expanse of the ground of being is completely at ease. All appearances come from ease, return to ease, and the coming and going are completely at ease too. When we relax, we enjoy that natural ease of awareness that is identical with who we are. It doesn't matter what color our skin is, what gender we are, or whether we are smart or not—this ease is completely available and accessible to everyone equally. Whoever one may be as a human being, it is possible to enjoy the complete ease of being in all circumstances.

To perceive all experiences as awareness is to realize the meaning of rich and vital openness. The awareness I am describing does not move anywhere or alter in any way. Take a moment now, and relax as the true nature of your own mind, the awareness that is changeless and unmoving. It has no color, shape, or substance that can be found anywhere.

When you arrive at the awareness that has no color or shape, look for a center or circumference. Does that awareness have a center or circumference, or is it limitless and wide-open like space?

Now look around a little. Is what's looking moving anywhere? The things you're seeing may be changing, but is there anything changing in what's looking? Is there an inside and an outside that is divided by the skin line? Are there many objects outside yourself, or are all of these things actually appearances *within* awareness?

Finding no distinction between inside and outside, you arrive at awareness, which is vast as the sky. You also arrive at what awareness entails, which is the ability to engage in life in a way that is thoroughly enjoyable and completely beneficial for yourself and others.

If you've ever wondered what awareness is, it is just this. You recognize awareness when you allow all that appears to be *as it is*. You find that awareness has no outside or inside, no dimension, and no characteristics that can be substantiated.

To facilitate this understanding, first ask: where do appearances come from, where are they now, and where do they go? The appearing, the staying, the going—that is all awareness too. There is never any transition or change. During your examination you will see that just as mist arises out of the air and dissolves back into air, appearances are the magical display of awareness, arising in awareness and vanishing back into it. They are illuminations of awareness; that and nothing more. Appearances and awareness are completely synonymous.

Last night I had an interesting conversation. I was talking with a swami who has lived in Rishikesh¹ for a long time, and he was lamenting the changes in the area. He said, "When I came here to Rishikesh so long ago, it was just a small place with a tremendous spiritual atmosphere, and everyone here was either a sage or a seeker. Now, everything has changed, and all these people who come

¹ A famous place of pilgrimage on the Ganges River in northern India.

here don't care about seeking at all; they just want to have a good time. Wouldn't you agree that the River Ganges and this holy place are very special, and isn't it terrible what is happening here these days?"

I replied, "You know, every place is special. And no matter what appears anywhere, the law of impermanence always applies. What has appeared will eventually vanish, and what hasn't yet appeared will come to appear. All of these things that were going on here at one time are disappearing, and other things are appearing. When things are changing as dramatically as they are today, it is just another expression of the immutable law of change and impermanence."

The conversation made me think about the new holy river where spiritual seekers are gathering today. Do you know what that river is? The Internet! The holy river of the Internet is an incredible manifestation that can connect human beings everywhere. And it's flowing throughout the world.

Technology has gone a long way towards bringing about a foundation for global unity. Today we can go to remote parts of Tibet and find monks with cell phones! A marvelous web of communication has come about, and it's all part of the holy river where the whole human race can gather.

For a very long time direct teachings—like those of Great Freedom—have been very difficult to receive. They were taught by only a few people, and many of the teachers were inaccessible. Seekers had to go and find a teacher to instruct them, and often they had to prove themselves in some way in order to get the teachings.

But things have changed in the modern world. The tradition of sages and seekers coming together is very significant, but we don't need to hold on to any traditional idea about how things must be or look. Wisdom has never gotten stuck anywhere. It doesn't get stuck in

historical circumstances, historical figures, or traditions. We don't need to be fixed in any of our belief systems, no matter how elevated we believe them to be, or how many people might believe in them. All we need do is relax in the awareness that's always present. It's beyond all conventional descriptions of this or that, and it's always right here.

Q: This reference you made to the Internet really intrigues me. I know the Internet is a lot of things, but I'd never thought of it as a "holy river!" Could you maybe go into that a bit more?

Candice: Well, first of all, the Internet and computers are a great metaphor for the appearance and disappearance of points of view within the basic space of awareness. For example, digital information moves around in the form of ones and zeros, and those ones and zeros form an image on a computer monitor that seems to be real. I'm sure that many of us have gone to a web site and gotten completely engrossed in it for hours at a time, but the thing that we're so enthralled with is nothing but a collection of ones and zeros appearing and disappearing on the computer screen!

Another example of this effect is a pointillist painting. Pointillism is a style of painting where the artist paints a scene—not by using brushstrokes—but by applying thousands and thousands of tiny points of color with the tip of the brush. When the painting is looked at from afar, one sees a fantastic picture of a landscape or a human face, but if one comes very close, one sees that the painting is just a bunch of dots which, as a whole, create an image.

Whether it is pointillism or the bits and bytes of computerized representations, we're looking at a bunch of dots, which can be compared to points of view within awareness. If we insist that there is an inherent reality to the image we are seeing, our understanding will

be very limited. If, however, we're able to recognize that the image on the computer screen, the pointillist painting, or the perceptions of our senses are made up of points of view and nothing more, then we've increased our capacity to recognize the awareness which underlies all points of view. We've increased our capacity to know what is really at the basis of perceptions.

Another thing to consider in following this metaphor is how the Internet is completely open, and how it came about through radically unconventional ways of thinking. The rapid growth of the Internet into a huge global phenomenon didn't come about as a result of the efforts of a government or a large organization; it was a grassroots effort, which came from many, many people who were able to make a leap into thinking in a new way. The Web was developed by grassroots users who wanted to ensure that information be free. It was not developed by corporations or governments. Open source applications such as the Linux operating system and the Web encyclopedia, Wikipedia, emerged that could be altered by their users. This represented a tremendous challenge to the long-held assumption that an application had to be strictly controlled by an authority structure.

Early pioneers of the Internet predicted that hundreds of millions of people would have a personal computer and that the Internet would spread all over the world. Most people scoffed and said that this would never happen. The conventional thinking was that most people wouldn't buy computers and wouldn't pay for Internet access. Well, now we see what's happened! Fifteen years after those predictions, far more than the predicted number of people own computers or computing devices, and access to the Internet is available all over the world.

Similarly, we are now at a time when more and more people will be getting familiar with awareness. Like the Web, Linux, and Wikipedia, Great Freedom is a grassroots movement. This movement makes the skillful means of awareness available to everyone. We must do this for ourselves as individuals and for our species as well, because if we don't, we may be on our way out as a species. We need to develop a balanced view in order to survive.

As I see it, one scenario would be that only a fraction of humanity—say a billion or so—will get familiar with awareness. The best-case scenario would be that everyone would be able to do so, because the direct instructions on how to become familiar with awareness are now so directly accessible. Now, one might think that this is an outrageous prediction, but didn't it sound outrageous fifteen years ago when those few people were predicting that the Internet would eventually be available to hundreds of millions of people?

We are now a global human culture, with the capacity to freely share information all around the world. As a result, we're developing a more standardized way of communicating; we have language systems that are getting more and more blended and cultural expressions that are becoming more and more common to all. We're also beginning to see standardization to some degree in the language and concepts we have for discovering the nature of existence. This is comparable to millions of people using the same website, such as Google, for example. Everyone who uses Google has a basic understanding about it that is held in common with other people who use it.

Due to some extent to the standardization of global culture, teachings that were once limited to a specific culture or tradition are now being made accessible to much of humanity. Direct instructions for how to become familiar with awareness are now available to

anyone with access to an Internet connection. The Great Freedom teachings are designed to be user-friendly for the modern person. They relate to the experience of a broad range of people and are not culturally based or beholden to a specific tradition. Such teachings can now easily spread around the world, not only due to the Internet, but also because they are communicated in a modern language and directly meet the needs of the people of this age.

Afflictive States

Chapter Nine

"In maintaining awareness, we discover the lack of separation between happiness and suffering. What that means in a practical way is that, whether there's happiness or whether there's suffering, we can be totally at ease and serene."

The term "afflictive states" refers to thoughts, emotions, and sensations that are experienced as disturbing. Many of us have felt overwhelmed at times by deeply distressing states. We can't stand the pain and suffering, and we keep looking for a way out of the torment of these afflictive states, but it may be that a way out has never been described to us in a simple way.

When we rest as awareness, we find our way out. We discover our essence, which is unaffected by any kind of emotional state. When we look with discrimination, we can see that whatever happens in our life, even if in the moment it seems like a terrible tragedy, really cannot alter or change our awareness at all. Awareness is absolutely constant; it never changes. In this discovery we find true freedom—and tremendous compassion for ourselves and others. We find the effortless wisdom to know how to take care of ourselves and the planet we live on. We discover our basic human goodness. This is what the Great Freedom Teaching offers.

Mastery of afflictive states doesn't come from cultivating positive states or transforming negative states into positive states. True mastery comes from resting the mind in the pure awareness that is its essence, and then seeing whatever appears as a form of that awareness. Our mind is naturally wise and helpful, and is inseparable from limitless, timeless, pure awareness. When we try to micro-

manage the mind by attempting to modify or censor what occurs in it, we cut ourselves off from our inherently peaceful, happy, and beneficial nature. All appearances, whether we describe them as afflictive, negative or positive, are only the dynamic energy of awareness and nothing more.

Since they're made of the same awareness, all appearances are equal, and since they're evanescent, mirage-like appearances that have no independent reality, there's nothing to be gained or lost from them. Rather than resisting or desiring these appearances, or trying to change them in any way, we simply rest as they arise, and recognize in each appearance the pure awareness which is the essence of our own being.

In maintaining awareness, all points of view are resolved—but not through making negative points of view into positive points of view. Nothing about ourselves needs to be changed! Now, when we first hear that we don't need to get rid of negative thoughts and emotions, many people think, "How can that be? If I just let my thoughts and emotions run wild, I'll turn into a barbarian! Everyone will find out what I'm really like!" But as we begin to develop confidence in awareness, far from turning into a barbarian, we discover the deep peacefulness that is our inherent nature—and as we continue to rest, we begin to manifest the profound wisdom that comes from being undistracted by anything that appears. All the thoughts and emotions will be whatever they are, but they will not disturb us any longer.

Now, when I speak about extremely afflictive states, I'm not talking as a philosopher; I'm talking as someone who's experienced very difficult and disturbing emotional states. For years I tried to overcome my afflictive thoughts and emotions through all kinds of

means: achievements, philosophy, psychology, intellectual understanding, prayer, socializing, sex, alcohol and marijuana, to name the main ones. However, when I got into a particularly disturbing situation twenty-six years ago, none of those approaches worked anymore. I was in a state of incredible fear and couldn't find comfort in any of the belief systems or remedies I'd previously relied on. I found no relief in anything I'd ever learned, in any self-help technique, or in any person I knew.

In the midst of that crisis, I somehow discovered that all the painful emotional states had as their underlying basis a vast, infinite pure space that is completely free from suffering. At the time I didn't know exactly how to describe that realization; I just knew that to rest in that space brought instantaneous relief from the pain. In fact, the more I rested there, the more I saw that it gave the same relief in all experiences, whether positive or negative. The relief wasn't separate from what appeared; it was the root of the appearance and included the appearance. The more I rested as that relief, the more a warm sense of well-being began to pervade everything. Gradually I discovered the ability to be in all situations without impediment, and remain in complete ease no matter what was occurring. This was the seed that has now grown into the Great Freedom Teaching.

Great Freedom teaches that thoughts and emotions don't have an independent existence; they're nothing but ephemeral appearances within awareness and have no power of their own. Most of us have learned to use our mind in a very limited way to describe ourselves and what's going on in the world. But when we have only this limited relationship with the mind, we won't have the zest or energy for the marvelous contributions we're capable of making to the world and to ourselves. Even if we outwardly seem to be very accomplished people,

we'll be withering on the vine compared to what we could be if we weren't trying to micro-manage all our thoughts and emotions. If we spend our lives battling with our thoughts and emotions as if they had an independent nature, we'll never see them for what they truly are.

In boxing, two fighters try to pummel each other into unconsciousness. Well, when we spend our lives immersed in the grueling practice of trying to get rid of afflictive states, it's like having a boxing match with our minds! Taking our thoughts and emotions to be enemies that we're afraid of, we feel that we need to beat them into submission, always afraid that if we don't, they're going to wear us down with their jabs day after day, and finally knock us out for good!

To analyze thoughts and emotions, reject them, or try to fix them with different approaches serves only to strengthen their apparent reality. We've really been boxing only with shadows, but every attempt to change or improve our thoughts only gives the shadows more seeming substance.

We're always looking for something that's going to make us feel better. In wanting to improve ourselves, we might say, "Tomorrow I'm going to be a good person. I'm *not* going to get mad and blow my top!" Then the next day comes, and we just can't keep the thoughts and emotions in place, and the top blows off, right in the boss's face! We want to achieve freedom from negative thoughts and emotions by reshaping them into positive thoughts and emotions, but this really can't be done permanently. Thoughts and emotions are inherently spontaneous and unpredictable. Trying to control them is like trying to hold on to the reflection of the moon in a pond. There's nothing to hold on to—and there's no "you" to do the holding! Both the subject and the object are like a mirage.

Perhaps we'll buy a self-help book that tells us how to deal with depression and low self-esteem. We'll feel happy and hopeful for a while, but when we set the book aside, what happens? The old negative thoughts just come rushing back in. So, we pick up another self-help book that has other solutions, and the same thing happens again, because we're simply applying one point of view to change another. It's a fruitless endeavor, and it never really works.

We should be aware that it's not only the negative thoughts and emotions that are disturbing—*all* thoughts and emotions are in a sense disturbing if we don't recognize that at their basis they're all vivid appearances of awareness. We try to keep the ones we like, but we can't. And we try to get rid of the ones we don't like, but we can't do that either, so both ways it's painful!

In maintaining awareness, we discover the lack of separation between happiness and suffering. We see that, whether there's happiness or whether there's suffering, we can be totally at ease and serene. How? We rest as the awareness that is the fundamental nature of both happiness and suffering, and there we discover real peace. We find the ease of being that is unaffected by any emotional state. This means we'll have many new options in life; we don't need to cling to old assumptions concerning happiness and suffering when they come up in us. We have a much more profound understanding that, however our own joys or sufferings might appear, their underlying basis is the same.

In the beginning, for most people, it's easier to momentarily rest as awareness when positive and neutral points of view appear, and more difficult to rest when negative points of view are present. As we practice resting with positive and neutral states, our ability to rest increases. Eventually we'll be able to rest more and more with the

negative states as well. When negative states arise, it can be very difficult at first to enjoy the ease of our being, because everything in us is screaming, “No, no! This can’t *possibly* be awareness!” It might even seem completely impossible to rest with states such as panic, anger, hatred, confusion, and jealousy, but that doesn’t mean it *is* impossible. We’ve just trained ourselves to believe that these emotions are a threat. But in resting as awareness we can understand the non-threatening nature of the afflictive emotions. By repeatedly resting as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, we support ourselves in maintaining awareness even when afflictive states appear.

A lot of times we’ve looked for ways to get rid of our afflictive states through antidotes. However, even if we find a way to drown the afflictive states for a while with a bottle of vodka, or by smoking a joint, or taking an ecstasy pill—when it wears off, what happens? The afflictive states simply come flooding back. Maybe the antidotes we use aren’t as extreme as the ones I just mentioned. Instead of taking drugs or getting drunk, perhaps we watch television all day, look at pornography, play endless electronic games, sleep or eat too much. Or perhaps we call friends and gossip, work extra long hours, or engage in other activities that distract us from our pain. Whatever the modes of escape may be, they’re all antidotes, and none of them can fully resolve our negative thoughts and emotions.

No matter how bound up you are in any of these afflictive states, I would urge you to avoid using antidotes, and just rest. If you feel like you’re really in the grip of something, reach out for support from the Four Comforts, and then do your best to rest as awareness and get to know the essence of who you are. Rest in the relaxed nature of your own being, see everything as an expression of that pure being, and whatever is appearing will naturally resolve itself.

One could continue to give meaning and significance to the stories we have, but why bother? One story generates another. All the stories about our perceived deficiencies start getting fired up: "I'm not good enough," or "I don't want to fall in love because then that person might abandon me," or "I can't get the job I really want because I'm not competent enough," or "I can't do what I really want because I don't have enough money." The more we limit ourselves with such stories, the more suffering they generate. We can also use our stories to try to grasp for more peace of mind, but this only increases the restlessness of our mind. Using stories to try to settle the mind is like trying to diminish the bubbles in a bubble bath by using a mixer to stir up the water!

Many people believe that they're subject to moods, and that moods are created by thoughts, and therefore thoughts hold a terrible power over their lives. These different moods come into our minds like gloomy weather patterns, and as a result our own well-being suffers. Then we make sure others suffer as well! Right? We might wake up in the morning with the thought, "I'm such a rotten person that I'm definitely going to have a crummy day!" We then respond to that thought as if it had complete power over us, and lo and behold, we find it comes true! And then we inflict our crummy mood on whomever we see!

In a mood-based life, every day is like a roller coaster ride of ups and downs. We have happy thoughts at the top of the roller coaster, and then we have a sad thought and all of a sudden the roller coaster plummets! If we respond with fear, the ride gets even scarier, and pretty soon we'll find ourselves in the 'dark tunnel of horrors'. By staying on this roller coaster, and believing every shift of mood reflects on who we are, we become blind to our deepest inner reality, which is

never affected by any mood, thought, or emotion. Encased in fear and pain, we become numb to our own suffering and the suffering of others.

The truth is that thoughts and emotions never have the power to rule us. It's only the way we react to them that seems to vest them with power. The underlying basis of all thoughts and emotions is the clear light of awareness, the completely relaxed essence of mind that's always at ease. Awareness is synonymous with wisdom, love, and energy. Through resting as the essence of our being, our life is infused with those qualities, and we find we always know what to do and how to act.

We all have a choice about how we use our minds: either to try to change the thoughts and emotions that appear within the mind, or to rest in the pure being that is the mind's basic space—our own native super-intelligence. To understand this is very important, because the first way leads to confusion and suffering, while the second way leads to real freedom. Resting as awareness takes us outside the parameters of a mood-based life, into the discovery of the timeless pure awareness that is our true nature.

If we spend our whole life giving meaning to our thoughts and emotions, our lips will freeze into a frown and all the light will go out of our eyes. It won't be long before we're sitting in the dining hall at a senior care facility complaining about our arthritis and poor bowel movements and pointing out everybody's faults: "Oh, will you look at the blue hair on that one! And that lady over there is the one who cheated at bingo!" Nothing will change; but now we'll be 80 years old, our bodies will be falling apart, and we'll continue to be lost in all these stories.

True well-being doesn't come from a process of selection where we say, "This is what is good about me, and this is what is bad." We are not divided into one part that's fundamentally flawed and sinful and another part called "awareness" that's wonderful and pure. Many of us have been raised to believe that we are sinners and that we're inherently flawed in some way, but at some point we have to realize that those ideas are completely untrue and have no power. Otherwise, we'll be in prison for life, whether we're living as a monk, a housewife, a corporate executive, or a prisoner at San Quentin. The real prison bars are in the mind! Freedom from imprisonment is found when we recognize that the afflictive states are *already* free, because their sole essence is awareness.

Because we take ourselves to be a personal identity that is destroyed at death, anything that seems threatening to that personal identity makes us feel very vulnerable. We may be afraid of earthquakes, tornadoes, political turmoil, violence, and terrorism, because these things threaten our bodily existence. The only way to resolve the grip of fear is to come to know that we are not ultimately dependent on anything for our existence, not even the survival of the body. The fears many of us have—getting seriously ill, growing old, dying, not having enough money, being subjected to the negative opinions of others—all drop away if we maintain awareness, for awareness can never be hurt in the least by any outcome. When we see that nothing can affect our well-being, not even death, then we truly have a choice in life. We're no longer collapsed into an idea of a "poor me" who's a victim of suffering; we're free to live as the limitless, timeless beings we truly are.

Whether you've done all sorts of horrible things in your life, or are a paragon of saintly virtue, this moment is equal for everyone. A

room can be dark for a very long time, but the moment the light switch is flipped on, the darkness disappears instantaneously. So just relax, smile, and enjoy yourself. That's how you're meant to be in all situations. When these stormy afflictive states come up, just relax completely; there's nothing you need to do about them. They disperse in and of themselves, like the flight path of a bird in the sky, and have never for a moment been separate from pure awareness. If you rest for short moments repeated many times, you will see that this is the case.

Q: This is the first time I've heard the term "afflictive states," and I'm not sure to what exactly you are referring when you use the term. Could you maybe give some specific examples of emotions or states that you consider afflictive?

Candice: Sure, I'd be happy to make this as clear as possible. The term "afflictive states" refers to thoughts, emotions, and sensations that are experienced as disturbing. The first category of afflictive states includes all the thoughts and emotional states related to desire. We really need to understand the importance of desire in the human experience. There's nothing wrong with desire in itself, because the ultimate desire is to get to know ourselves as awareness. However, desire, or yearning, generally means the longing for things such as good health, staying young, food, money, sex, work, relationships, leisure, or whatever it might be.

Desire comes coupled with the belief that by getting what we desire, we will have well-being. Holding to this belief leads to an endless no-win cycle of continuing to desire—yet never fully attaining well-being. Even though over and over again our experience is that the desire does not bring us what we're seeking, we continue to desire anyway. We could say that the blind repetition of desiring is a form of

insanity, because we're doing the same thing over and over again—and yet expecting different results.

The second primary afflictive state is aggression, which could also be called anger or hate. Anger or hate towards people, places, or things is a form of aggression that we see played out in families, communities, nations, and in the world. Many times though, aggression is not only directed towards outward objects, but also inwardly towards ourselves. We're engaging in anger and hatred by hating our own thoughts, emotions, and sensations, and feeling that we need to change them. As a result, we may be angry at ourselves, and this only leads to anger towards others.

The third primary afflictive state includes conceit, smugness, pride, and arrogance, which are traits that lead people to have exaggerated estimations of themselves and their opinions. Proud and arrogant persons think that they know what is right, and if others disagree with them, they're convinced that the other person must be wrong. They express and defend these very strong opinions in such a way that they do not honor or acknowledge the opinions of others.

Close-mindedness, which is traditionally called ignorance, is the fourth primary afflictive state. When we are close-minded, we cut ourselves off from the recognition of awareness. We say, "There might be awareness, but I don't want to go there. I want to continue to indulge or avoid all my thoughts, emotions, and sensations." Unless we can rest as conceit, pride, or arrogance, we'll never be able to accept the contributions and suggestions of the teacher, the teaching, and the community in which we involve ourselves. To accept the contributions of the teacher means that we accept that there is another person just like us who is already resting as awareness without trying to do so, and because they have realized the wisdom

powers of awareness, they can skillfully share with us how to rest as they do.

The last afflictive state is envy and jealousy. Envy could be defined as spite and resentment at seeing the successes of another, and jealousy as mental uneasiness from suspicion or fear of rivalry. It is really a hell realm to continually be circling around in our own thoughts, emotions, and experiences, taking them to be real, and trying to do something about them. When we're constantly trying to indulge, avoid, or replace thoughts and emotions with something better, we can never get out of this realm. Wow, these disturbing states are looking kind of bleak, aren't they!

The very, very important point to make about afflictive states is for us *to not reject what is appearing*. To not reject afflictive states means that when they come up, we rest as awareness rather than acting on them or wanting them to go away.

Resting as awareness is not an avoidance or a rejection of something, and it is not suppression or repression. Afflictive states and the power of wisdom are one and the same. Even though that might seem inconceivable at present, by the power of resting as awareness we prove it to ourselves. We come to see in our own experience that with all these exceedingly troublesome states like fear, anger, aggression, envy, jealousy, conceit, pride, or desire, there is really nothing there—just as there's really nothing substantial in a mirage. However, we'll never see that as long as we indulge, avoid, or reject what is appearing.

When we rest as these afflictive states and do not reject them, they dissolve into themselves, and when they dissolve into themselves, they become something wonderful instead of something terrible. Like a lotus blooming out of the mud that doesn't have a

speck of mud on it, so too, out of these totally afflictive states appears this totally magnificent power of wisdom, totally untainted in any way by the seemingly negative appearances.

When afflictive states are left unrejected they become spacious and expansive, because the nature of awareness is completely open and unobstructed. When they come up and we rest as awareness, then we allow the openness that is inherent in disturbing emotions to become evident. Aren't openness, good cheer, and warm-heartedness towards others a greater benefit to us than feeling tormented by disturbing states?

By resting as awareness, rather than engaging in afflictive states, we begin to feel more and more compassion, until we feel compassion all the time. Rather than acting on afflictive states, we rest when they come up, and loving-kindness appears from within them.

Similarly, afflictive states are transformed into lucidity and luminosity. Our mind becomes totally clear, and everything we see becomes luminous and radiant. Lastly, when disturbing states are left unrejected, they dissolve back into themselves, and appearing from within these states are fairness and a balanced view that produce insight about how to skillfully handle all situations.

When we rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times, all of these states dissolve into themselves, and what appears from within them is bliss, compassion, loving-kindness, lucidity, and a balanced view. This is amazing! This is the true meaning of nonduality. Bliss, compassion, loving-kindness, clarity, and a balanced view are the fundamental condition of afflictive states.

A Beautiful Death

Chapter Ten

"When we gain familiarity with awareness, then we have nothing to fear; even a terminal illness won't be daunting for us. We are able to be without impediment, whatever the situation is."

What appearance could be more demanding of us than death? Death is inevitable, and no one is left unaffected. A fundamental human dilemma is that all of our lives we know we are going to die. In acknowledging this universal dilemma, we develop great sensitivity and compassion for ourselves and for everyone else, because we know that everyone dies, and not just us.

Yet, we should know in a profound way that birth, life, and death are all timelessly free appearances of a more fundamental condition. When we become familiar with the reality that all the appearances, including death, are wide-open and have never been made into anything with an independent nature, then when death comes, we are ready, and we won't be so troubled by it. Death can then be an easygoing and carefree moment that is complete and identical to any other.

When we maintain awareness in the direct experience of any point of view during our lifetime, it is a preparation for the final point of view of death. By the power of sustaining awareness, without attempting to correct appearances, all the experiences we encounter in life are a practice for that ultimate experience. Unless we know that dying is just part of the living process, we can be really startled and confused when death appears.

If we're angry that we're dying and we elaborate on that anger, then we'll attempt to cling to life. If we try to avoid death and all the feelings that go along with dying, then we'll be absolutely miserable. If we aren't familiar with awareness, then as we are dying, we might become scared and grab onto the point of view of life and living. We would then be desperately clinging to life rather than seeing that we're on the verge of encountering the last point of view we will ever have—death. If, however, we become familiar with instantaneous awareness during our lives, then when it is present so beautifully and obviously at death, we'll know how to rest in peace as that awareness.

Some years ago my beloved younger sister died of cancer. Her doctors had told her that she had only two months to live, and she informed the whole family about the prognosis. When any family receives news like this, each person has their own response. The news can in some ways force them to look more deeply at who they are, or at least who they take themselves to be, and who they take their dying family member to be. This occurred for the people in my family and for my sister as well.

Fortunately, my sister's practice of resting was something that she could rely on to support her in preparing for her death. She really came to terms with the fact that this was the end of her life and that she was dying. As it became clear that the end was near, she called us to come and be with her. When she died, we were on the bed gathered around her. I was holding her hand, and when she took her final breath, I could feel her last pulse. She'd been quietly suffering, but along with the suffering there was a sense of great relief and profound peace of mind in her.

With her last breath, her face went from being calm with no smile to having the most incredible smile I've ever seen in my life. She

was smiling as though she had seen the most beautiful vision one could imagine. Several hours after her death, that smile was still there. She was in a state of utter lucidity and peace—that natural state of utter lucidity that is totally beyond the body.

When we die, if we've previously recognized the reality of what we are, we just slip effortlessly into that natural state of utter lucidity. This lucidity was so clear in her because she was able to accept her death so gracefully due to her practice of gaining confidence in awareness. She was so well prepared that her death brought complete relief and the resolution of all points of view, including those she had had about death.

The simplicity and beauty of her death had an immense power and affected the entire family in a wonderful way. The way she died was actually a form of loving communication, and it had a significant and lasting effect on every one of us. The result was that all the points of view we had about the others in the family—our judgments and opinions of each other, and whom we had taken each other to be based on our past histories—were dissolved.

Sometimes we take people to be their past, and we keep trying to define them with that yardstick. To make ourselves feel more comfortable, we need for them to be something we can label, but this prevents us from seeing them as they really are. When my sister died, we were so profoundly touched by witnessing her death, all of those judgments were erased in each one of us. The subtle and overt tensions, negative patterns, and arguments and analysis were dissolved, and our relationships were brought to a new level.

When we talk about the importance of death, it's really essential for us to realize that death is something that we can and should become acquainted with before we die. My sister had gotten to know

herself very deeply through her practice of resting. In the Great Freedom Teaching we become familiar with ourselves through a very similar practice, which is the gradual familiarization with ourselves as timeless awareness. Increasingly we become familiar with our true identity—the fundamentally perfect condition that is the nature of everything. That awareness is the basis and essence of all our points of view, including our points of view about death.

When we die, there is the instantaneous awareness that is forever present, as well as a complete loss of the memory of life, and the absence of any longing to return to a point of view of living.

When we gain familiarity with awareness, then we have nothing to fear; even a terminal illness won't be daunting for us. We're able to be without impediment, whatever the situation is. This increasing familiarity with awareness will carry us through all the doctor's appointments, all the worries about the changes in our lives because of sickness and aging, and all the concerns about dying.

The attitude we have towards death either gives us freedom in our life or lack of freedom. If we have the idea that death is the end of us, then we'll consider death to be an enemy, and it will be something that we're scared to death of! We won't want it to happen, because we think it means the end; but thinking that death is the end is just an assumption about the way things are. At death, it is only points of view that change. There is no other change.

If we want to know what it's like to die, then we need only to go to sleep tonight. When we go to sleep, our conceptual framework changes from something in the waking state that seems kind of manageable to something in the dream state that is phantasmagoric and where all sorts of images start to appear.

In a similar way, when we're dying, the grip loosens and we can no longer keep control of all our experiences in any sort of ordered way. If we have had some practice during our life of not trying to arrange the display of our thoughts, emotions, and experiences, then when we die, we will not be dismayed by the disorder we may experience.

When we're alive, we have certain types of thoughts and emotions, but when we're in the process of dying, those radically alter. We don't have the same kinds of experiences; instead, we have unpredictable experiences that we've never had before. One of the things that will happen is that the different sensory mechanisms of our body will shut down. The eyesight, the ability to feel tactile sensations, the ability to smell things or to hear or respond to what's being said—all of these will go one by one. Finally, the breathing and the heartbeat will also stop.

We may have emotions that are new to us regarding the experience of death, and then we may have thoughts like, "I have eaten my last meal! I will never see my loved ones again! I am going somewhere and no one is going with me!" If throughout our lives we've been indulging, renouncing, or replacing our points of view in order to feel better, then we won't have the mental energy to do that any longer. Our supposed ability to think our way into well-being or control our thoughts will also be lost. Unless we've learned to rest as awareness, none of the strategies we've cultivated during our lifetime for handling disturbing thoughts and emotions will help us when we die.

These are the kind of very powerful thoughts, emotions, and experiences we'll have, and it's quite possible that they'll be far more afflictive than anything we've ever experienced before. But if we are

resting as awareness, it's likely we'll be able to let these things be as they are. We're only distracted when we think something needs to be done about what's appearing. All the thoughts, emotions, and sensations that appear at death—we can let them be what they are. Any thought or emotion will disappear in and of itself, like a line drawn in water. The appearances have no power whatsoever to affect us unless we let them.

If we haven't rested as awareness, the process of death can be very frightening, because it seems that it's all over for us. There can be a desperate struggle to hold on to life. Alternatively, we may be relieved to know that our suffering will end. If however—rather than being lost in the point of view of dying—we are resting as awareness, then all of our experiences and reactions can be easefully released. We are there resting in the peacefulness of everything just as it is.

Awareness never changes and is ever present as that which knows all these things that are occurring—not only during the process of death, but during the process of life as well. Awareness is that which knows death, but death does not affect awareness, just as birth doesn't. We might believe that awareness depends on the Earth, sun, time, space, or life in order to be present. However, awareness is not dependent on anything in order to be naturally present—not the heartbeat, the breath, the warmth of the body, or even the universe. When the heartbeat, the breath, and the warmth of the body all go and the universe is no more, awareness *is*.

The more we rest completely, the more we arrive at an experiential realization of this fundamental nature of awareness that is beyond all conceptual and intellectual categories. If through resting we have familiarized ourselves with the process of death, then we will be able to be completely at peace when it occurs. When awareness gets

so brilliant that it outshines everything—including the life and death of the physical body—we'll be able to be totally relaxed and have the complete enjoyment of our true body, which is the body of awareness.

Abidance as awareness isn't some kind of strange state that only applies to certain people. It is the natural state of all human beings, and the more familiar we are with it, the more comfortable we can be in all circumstances, including the circumstance of death.

Q: In a lot of the spiritual teachings today we hear about being "unborn." What does that mean exactly in relation to what you are talking about?

Candice: Most of us take ourselves to be an entity that is destructible, namely the body, and we think that awareness is generated by this entity. We assume we are born and that we're going to die. The idea of being born is indoctrinated from early on. Most parents will say after their child is born, "Here is our baby! I am so glad she was born!" This idea that we were born is constantly being reinforced in us. Death is also very much in the background of everything all the time, because what comes with this idea of being born is the idea that we will die. Once we learn that we are this destructible body, we feel that we can be destroyed in the finality of death. At the same time, we may have some unconscious points of view that subtly avoid that finality, such as: "Everyone else will die, but I won't. Somehow I am going to escape. Others might get terribly ill, but I won't. I won't age, and I won't die." Does that sound familiar?

In some spiritual teachings, something may be said about our being "unborn." This proposition goes against everything we've heard so far. First we heard that we're born, and suddenly we hear that we're unborn! What to make of that? The truth is that "being born" is

an extreme point of view just as “being unborn” is an extreme point of view. What we emphasize in the Great Freedom Teaching is that the unborn and the born are not two. What is it that’s aware of either being born or unborn? What we think about as unborn and born has never been separate, and both concepts are due to awareness.

This understanding cannot be arrived at through intellectual speculation, but only through the practical experience of completely relaxing body and mind in all circumstances. As complete confidence is gained in awareness, perfect mental stability and mental clarity become obvious. I’m not suggesting just sitting around in an easy chair all the time, but rather that we completely relax body and mind in all situations, no matter what may be appearing. Only through profoundly remaining in the fundamental condition can these concepts be understood.

Most of us go through life fearing death, because we believe that we’ve been born and we’ll die, and also that we’re something solid, stable, and finite that will end at death. However, what we call ‘I’ has no independent nature—its only nature is the fundamental condition underlying everything.

Q: I grew up in the sort of religious background that has horrific versions of what can happen after death. I find it really hard to rest with these old ideas that I want to be free of but which seem to still have a hold on me.

Candice: Some traditions have very complex descriptions of the states after death; but whatever those descriptions are, the key instruction is just to rest as awareness in the direct encounter with all that appears. Know that they’re just appearances of awareness. No matter what the appearance is, just relax.

As I said earlier, when the physical death of the body occurs, all kinds of appearances can and do arise that we have never seen before. A lot of these appearances have to do with our belief systems. If we have a strong belief in horrible things happening after death, then it's possible that we'll have such points of view when we die. I'm not saying that these things will happen for everyone, but many people have extremely fixed beliefs about such things, so when they undergo a death experience, then all the belief systems that they've had may appear.

If we're living our whole life focused on ideas of who we take ourselves to be, we're always trying to keep the lid on all the things we don't want to think about—all the negative points of view, thoughts, and emotions. When we begin to rest as awareness, what happens? The lid is off! Once the lid is off, all the appearances start to appear everywhere like fireworks in the sky. However, if we've gained familiarity with awareness, this won't be a problem for us. When all the negative points of view arise, we can rest as awareness for short moments, repeatedly, until it becomes automatic. This is the pivotal instruction.

Q: I recognize that most people either have a very fearful relationship with death or they choose to ignore it as best they can, but I know in my own life that I want to understand that death is very much a part of life. Can you give some more down-to-earth examples so I can follow what you're saying?

Candice: There are many examples for what I am speaking about. For instance, I am always amazed at how many people come out here to the seaside and buy a house right on the edge of an eroding cliff! Haven't they seen that the cliff is gradually being worn away and that

eventually their house may fall into the ocean? They seem to feel that they are somehow outside of the processes of nature.

However, when we're at complete ease within ourselves, we know that we are part of nature. We can look at a house on the edge of an eroding cliff and go, "Ah ha. That eroding cliff is just like me; I am eroding every moment too. I'm not going to be here long, and that house on the cliff isn't either!" When we are able to greet all the unthinkable things like death and destruction with ease, then we feel totally comfortable and at ease with ourselves, and we feel like this with everyone else too. We just fit into nature and into the all-together, and we don't feel any separation from anything.

Now, how about the flowers in the garden? The reason we love flowers is because they're a beautiful reflection of who we are. Coming out of a rich, vigorous emptiness, we're like seeds that sprout, go through their stages of growth and flowering glory, then gradually age, rot, are composted, and then disappear into the earth again. This is what sparks our interests in the flowers we enjoy—they're a precise reflection of ourselves. We don't cling to the rose and say, "Please don't go, I can't stand it if you leave me!" We know that the rose will fade and die, and this is just the way it is for the rose and for us.

All the thoughts that appear and events that occur happen as naturally as the flowers in the garden. They're like a shooting star in the night sky and are their own undoing. Nothing can be done to either encourage or prevent them. Even if we really love certain people very much, someday we'll leave them behind—either we'll die or they'll die. When we are entirely at ease, then that completely restful nature of our own being will be naturally present no matter what's going on, whether we're with the people we love in physical form or not, or the animals we love, or the flowers we love.

I have one final story that may help give us quite a different perspective. There was once a very great teacher who was teaching among other things that one had to leave the world, live in a cave, and sit in meditative absorption for many years in order to realize the ultimate.

At some point though, he said to himself, "This isn't it." This great man saw that the ultimate was not something to be acquired, but something that was ever present, and that there was no destination and no one going there. He was able to go far beyond what he had previously taught, and he escaped from the cage of his own philosophy.

As he was dying, he was completely at ease, and he was able to say, "My delight in death is far, far greater than the delight of traders at making vast fortunes at sea, or those who are proud of their victory in battle, or of those sages who have entered the rapture of perfect absorption. So, just as a traveller who sets out on the road when it is time, I will not remain in this world any longer, but will go to dwell in the stronghold of the great bliss of deathlessness." Now, that is certainly a beautiful and comforting perspective about death!

Practices

Chapter Eleven

"There are different kinds of practices that are appropriate for different people, so in that sense there is no practice that is inherently right or wrong. A correct understanding is that everything is perfect all at once, just as it is. This is the attitude of the wholesome goodness of awareness, the totally balanced view."

The easiest and most direct of all practices is to rest naturally in the ease of our own being and to return to that repeatedly. Resting is something that anyone can do; it is absolutely accessible and available to everyone, and it isn't dependent on special circumstances. No matter what happens, we can rest with all appearances, simply seeing all appearances as passing forms of awareness. In this way we overcome all potential obstacles by not seeing anything as an obstacle. Nothing need be an impediment or pose a threat. We pull out all the stops and we are at full throttle! With that kind of enthusiasm we rest with anything that comes up.

People sometimes assume that resting means that we don't need to do anything but sit under a tree—but it doesn't mean that. Whether we're sitting, working incredibly hard, or engaging in all sorts of activities, we maintain awareness as we do those things. In whatever way we go about our lives, we rest imperturbably. Perhaps we've been ceaselessly meditating for years or doing incredible practices throughout our lives, or we've been very busy with our business, career, or family. These are all perfect opportunities to rest, and as such, we can continue with them while resting. Nothing need be excluded. The result of maintaining awareness will always be increased

efficiency, kindness, peace of mind, and beneficial activities. Eventually it will lead to perfect mental stability.

If we are drawn to sustaining awareness, then that is right for us. If we don't feel drawn to it, then it probably isn't right for us at this point. Many people live their whole life without ever knowing about awareness, so just to know about it is incredible. However, this doesn't mean that maintaining awareness is right and other things are wrong. I would suggest that a person choose a practice and then commit to it one hundred percent. Only you can decide what is a match for you; but whatever it is, once again, commit to it one hundred percent.

There are different kinds of practices that are appropriate for different people, so in that sense there is no practice that is inherently right or wrong. One of the wonderful things about the wholly positive intelligence that unifies everything, is that whatever teaching any person wants or needs, it will appear for them in one way or another. There are so many types of practices, observances, and ways of being, and they are all okay. They are a perfect expression for whoever is participating in them. A correct understanding is that everything is perfect all at once, just as it is. This is the attitude of the wholesome goodness of awareness, the totally balanced view.

Yet, if we're sustaining awareness and combining that with a practice that assumes that there is a subject who is headed towards a destination of awareness, then that would be mixing two things that don't go together, like oil and water. With resting as awareness there is no destination and no one going anywhere. Timelessly free pure awareness is already right here, and we've never been separate from it. There is nothing to realize or to attain, and no practice is needed to get us to where we already are. When we relax, we get familiar with what has always been.

We can be involved in any practice—mantra repetition, selfless service, meditation, chanting, devotion, or anything else—as long as we don't think it's leading somewhere. If we think we are a seeker doing practices to get to a destination, then we are missing the pure awareness that is already here and already free. If practices are done with the idea that they are leading to a destination, they will actually strengthen our identification with a limited personal identity, and no matter how many practices we do with that attitude, the destination of the complete well-being of awareness will remain out of reach.

Q: I see a lot of people these days proselytizing about their religion. They have a lot of conviction about their faith and they feel like they have to convert other people. I personally don't like proselytizing, but at the same time I know that people like my parents are suffering and that they would benefit from this teaching. What am I to do in a case like this?

Candice: Once we have seen our own suffering, we really see the suffering of others, not just in an intellectual way, but in a completely clear and heartfelt way. We may very much want to do something for other people, and there is no rule about what to do or what to say. It just happens spontaneously. One approach is to wait for an opening and then speak to them in an appropriate way, but even better than that is the power of your own example.

If your parents see a change in you, they might say, "What happened? I notice something different about you. You seem to be so much more at ease." There's no need to force a message on people or to say anything that is uninvited or unwelcome. That would probably only be a turn-off for them. However, if your parents see a change in you and are interested to know more about how you changed, they

will come to you on their own. In that case, there would be attraction rather than promotion.

Q: Is there any benefit in being with others who are maintaining awareness, or is it more or less an individual affair?

Candice: First of all, awareness is equal everywhere and with everyone, and there is no ramping up of awareness that is due to being in certain locations. At the same time, it is very natural and beneficial for us as human beings to come together with others who are committed to the same things we are. This is a simple, straightforward, and practical human matter. If we have friends who are living in the same way we are, it makes it a lot easier, because they can give us understanding and support. The community of people sustaining awareness reinforces and reaffirms our choice to live as awareness and rest as awareness.

Q: It sounds great to be able to just be there practicing resting as awareness, but what if I had five kids to feed? I can't just sit there satisfied with my own resting.

Candice: Well, are you talking about yourself or a hypothetical example? Why don't we talk about a real person? I have a husband, three kids, and eight grandchildren! The advice is exactly the same whether you have five kids to feed or not: to rest imperturbably, to rest repeatedly again and again, whatever the circumstantial points of view of one's life are. Whatever it is you're doing and whatever is happening in your life, that's a perfect circumstance for gaining confidence in awareness. Short moments repeated many times become automatic.

Q: Devotion is very important in my life, but I don't hear you using that word. Could you speak about devotion and whether one needs to cultivate the devotion of the heart?

Candice: In resting as awareness, devotion just naturally comes about. I don't know anything about cultivating devotion, because that isn't something that I ever did. What did happen was that I realized that the underlying basis of all my zillions of points of view was timeless freedom. I realized that this freedom was inseparable from those points of view, and that all my points of view were equal. I became incredibly devoted to that—unremittingly devoted to that. Out of that sprang devotion to everyone. That is what my life has been about: devotion to everyone. I have a very large family! If you feel the devotional impulse, consider yourself very lucky and take advantage of it, because it is a way to really enjoy the pure pleasure of true relationship.

When people talk about the devotion of the heart, the “heart” is not a location in the body. The heart is the essence of everything *as it is*. Inseparable from awareness is the heart; inseparable from awareness is love, and inseparable from awareness is God. In this Teaching we use the word “awareness” instead of “God” or “consciousness” because awareness is one word that all human beings can understand. We all know that we are aware, and no one can say that they are not aware. If people familiarize themselves with awareness, then they know that by which all is known.

When we rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times, we rest as love, we rest as the heart, we rest as wisdom, and we rest as devotion to everything as it is. When we hear these terms like the heart or devotion, then we need to know what they truly are. Devotion in the ultimate sense is the complete heart devotion to the

essence of our own being—the unmitigated, relentless heart devotion that can't be turned on or off. It is natural to us, and we recognize it when we rest as awareness. This is very, very beautiful.

Q: Could you speak about the need for prayer?

Candice: This is a question that is asked from time to time and is something that I've thought about very much throughout my life. The word "prayer" means "petition", but if you want to practice prayer, it is important to know what the *ultimate* petition would be. Praying to know yourself as awareness is a prayer worth praying. In that prayer, you are really praying to yourself!

Now, for most people the idea of praying to themselves is a little scary! We look at our lives and we think, "She said that when I pray, I'm praying to myself. That's a little daunting considering my track record!" However, we're not praying to ourselves as our conjured-up personal identity; we're praying to ourselves as the natural order of everything—the super-intelligence that's at the root of every single one of our thoughts and actions. We're praying to that which causes a flower to bloom. Isn't that a beautiful and inspiring idea? Isn't that just gorgeous to even consider!

No matter what kind of concept you've had of some kind of divinity or divine being, it's all right, but keep in mind that anything you can conceptualize is a point of view that appears within awareness. By knowing awareness, we know that which is the genesis of everything. It is the all-creating monarch of all concepts of divinity—and their opposites. All these concepts are equal, and they are superseded by the profound wisdom that is at the core of every appearance.

Q: What are your views concerning vegetarianism? Does one need to become a vegetarian in order to more readily recognize awareness?

Candice: When I was a young woman, I guess I'd heard of vegetarianism, but I wasn't a vegetarian. I'd also heard of meditation, but I'd never meditated. I might have heard of people called gurus, but it never occurred to me that they would be anyone I would meet. I might have read something about nonduality, but it wasn't anything that I really wanted to explore or think about.

What I did know in my own experience was that there was an indivisible ground of love in everything, and that human beings are inherently perfect. I had known that since I was a child, so I didn't need any scientific explanations or philosophy books to tell me that.

The massive shift I experienced twenty-six years ago was an opening up or refinement of my perception, where I was able to see everything as completely indivisible. From that point on, doing anything to achieve something looked totally absurd—like for example becoming a vegetarian in order to achieve the refined perception of awareness. It was obvious that it just didn't matter. Sitting on a cushion and watching thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise and fall in order to get to a goal—that didn't make any sense to me either.

When the timeless freedom of awareness is so easily accessible within the context of everything that's occurring right here and now, why add a lot of other things to try to make it occur? We breathe, and every single bit of that breath is filled with primordially pure awareness; that same awareness forms the essence of the plant or the meat we eat, so in that sense everything is equal. In the moment that we try to decide that things aren't equal or that some things are better than others, then that is a falling away from true wisdom.

The wisdom mind is the mind that knows everything as equal. Its wisdom comes from being all-encompassing—completely beyond all opposites and yet including all opposites—and not from categorizing phenomena. Wisdom itself is a ground of complete equality and evenness, which has never been bifurcated, divided, or split. It's a big relief to not have to judge everything as good or bad! The undoable becomes doable in allowing everything to be *as it is*. This may go against everything we believe, yet when we begin to gain confidence in awareness, we see that it is the case.

Q: It seems to me that in all the ancient traditions the most sincere and serious seekers achieved their high state through practicing austerities, or if not austerities, then undergoing serious disciplines. Is practicing austerities or undergoing disciplines something that you also recommend?

Candice: Wisdom can't be shaped from austerities or anything else, because everything already *is* wisdom. If we say that through austerities we're going to arrive at wisdom, then we're stating that there is someone who's going somewhere. We have the subject headed towards the object of a destination. When we rest as awareness, there is no subject or object from the beginningless beginning, and everything comes into a perfect balance.

We could look at a historical figure like the Buddha, who at some point in his life as a wandering seeker heard a teaching that told him he should be celibate and live in solitude. So he tried living in solitude and became celibate. Then he saw that this really wasn't enough, and he went to another teacher who gave him more instructions about how to control his thoughts and emotions, but that didn't lead anywhere either. Then he tried a practice of complete physical and mental

austerity. He got completely away from everyone and everything, starved himself, and put himself through all kinds of torture till he was nearly dead.

After he had tried everything else, he finally just sat down and relaxed, and the result was that everything fired up within him—his lust, his anger, his jealousy, his deep regret for having abandoned his wife, son, and parents—everything he'd been trying to neutralize with those practices. When he relaxed and just allowed all of that to be, he was able to sustain awareness without trying to change or push away any of those points of view. He then realized the true nature of the reality within.

After his realization, he didn't teach that everybody should just sit down and close their eyes, and that if they sat there long enough then something was going to happen. He taught that, no matter what afflictive states appear, one should not try to avoid them, replace them, or change them in any way. Instead, one should just let them be as they are.

I know from my own experience and from the experience of others that this principle is true. No matter how tweaked we feel by whatever's going on inside or outside, we need to relax completely, and in that relaxation the timeless freedom that is the unchanging basis of all points of view will be discovered. Relaxing the body and mind completely can take place anywhere, even when there are many thoughts stirring and there's a lot of physical activity.

Don't try to figure it out; don't try to hold to any of the ideas you have learned from reading books. It's all within your own experience; trust your own experience and the complete freedom that is the ground of every single perception.

Q: What is your view on doing whatever is necessary to purify oneself in order to be more receptive to the wisdom you're speaking about?

Candice: Everything already is a single nondual expanse of aware pure space that is primordially pure and entirely stainless and flawless. There has never been anything within it that needed to be purified in any way. When we rest imperturbably as this aware pure space, then imperturbable rest is the ultimate purification, so to speak. The ultimate purification is to realize that everything is primordially pure. As we rest as primordially pure awareness, it is realized that all spontaneous appearances are appearances of that primordial purity, no matter what their labels may be.

Only in seeing the flawless and stainless perfection that is already here can we realize that everything is totally pure in and of itself. That is the source of wisdom. Wisdom does not come about by examining appearances. Wisdom is beyond all this examination and all this attributing everything to cause and effect. We can only know that wisdom by resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times, until it becomes automatic. We can't recognize it in any other way.

Q: So many traditions from the East and West require that monks or priests be celibate. Is celibacy a prerequisite for the ultimate attainment in this life?

Candice: Well, if being celibate is what you want to do, that's fine, but it's not necessary. Nothing needs to be done to be who we are, because we already *are* who we are! If we say that something needs to be done, then we step aside from who we are. At the same time, nothing is excluded, so if a person feels naturally moved to celibacy, that's perfectly okay. However, if celibacy were taken to be like the

golden key to the destination of who we are, then that would be a detour. If we choose celibacy because that is the way we want to live, that's another matter.

Celibacy is a very specific aspect of the much broader issue of sexuality that all people must deal with. Celibacy neutralizes sexual desire but it doesn't completely resolve the phenomena of sexual desire. Only by the power of awareness can the full scope of sexual desire be understood.

One of the big problems that adds significantly to all the other problems in the world is the increase in population. With that particular problem, the only hope of really containing the population of the human species is for more and more people to realize awareness. Only by the power of awareness do we have a clear and beneficial perspective on sexual desire.

Q. Shouldn't one seek out solitude in order to avoid all the distractions of the world?

Candice: The more you relax, the subtler your perceptions become. Maybe your perceptions before had been involved in the world and being with everybody, but the more you relax, the more you might have a whole new set of perceptions that will come up. One such perception could be wanting to be in solitude, but that's just another point of view. When the true nature of phenomena is realized, then solitude becomes obsolete; there's no need whatsoever for solitude or any other extreme. If you simply look at being in solitude as a choice you've made, rather than something that's leading somewhere, then that would be fine, but if you look at it as necessary for your freedom, then it's a prison.

There is another way of looking at this issue of personal solitude. One of the things that came up for me early in the practice of maintaining awareness was the thought of living in solitude. "Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to live in a holy setting like an ashram in India or monastery in Tibet where I could just be alone with no computer and no telephone!" But the context in which I held all such inclinations is: what's going to be most beneficial to the whole, and how are one's talents going to be best used for the benefit of everyone? The human race is at such a critical juncture that we need as many people contributing as much as possible to the benefit of the whole in a marked way. This is so urgently important.

Meditation

Chapter Twelve

"One moment of instantaneous awareness brings more clarity than a lifetime of contrived meditation. That one moment of instantaneous awareness introduces us to that about ourselves that will never change. In this sense, every moment would be the ultimate meditation, no matter what the moment may contain."

The goal of meditation is often defined as the mental stability that continues throughout day and night, and complete equanimity no matter what is appearing in one's mind. The Great Freedom Teaching is free of doctrinal views about all forms of meditation that require altering the mind to conform it to any creed. It's best to not continue trying to correct the mind in any way, but simply to rest in its changeless basis. People all over the world are finding that an underlying intelligence reveals itself through the power of leaving the mind in its natural state of awareness. There's no need to change or correct the flow of mental events. By altering the mind, this intelligence remains hidden and outside one's experience. What we can expect to find in this secret intelligence is perfect mental stability, empathy, and skillful activities and ideas that are of benefit to all. We can expect to be warmer, friendlier, and more cooperative in a very natural way.

In simple terms, no one can proceed by means of meditative progress to their own awareness. It is a logical absurdity to look for something that is already here, and to do so distracts us from simple awareness. Within awareness, meditation appears as just another point of view equal to all other viewpoints. It has no special right or

privilege. Within awareness, all points of view are equal, and this is the understanding and recognition we must come to.

Resting the mind imperturbably throughout the day, without altering its content in any way, guarantees very swift access to awareness. In this practice, resting as awareness for short moments is repeated many times until it becomes spontaneous and automatic.

In this way, wide-open awareness becomes predominant at all times. We don't need to contrive a special period when we rest our mind—as in a meditation session. If we set up a special period, then it may be that we're separating that time out as somehow different from other times, and this can create an obstacle to discovering the awareness that is present in every moment. We don't need to look for meditative absorption in a special time or location, because it can't be found by fixing on one point to the exclusion of others.

In what we could call "contrived" meditation, the concentration is directed to a particular point, whether it's a mantra that's being repeated, the breath, a candle flame, or watching one's thoughts. It could be focusing on something or on nothing, but focusing on something and focusing on nothing are both focusing on something! When focused attention is used in meditation, it actually creates a new point of view, which subtly strengthens both the personal identity and the subject/object dichotomy: there is a subject (you), focusing on an object (the focus of meditative concentration).

Focusing on the breath or closing the eyes are attempts to do something special to alter the mind. Awareness has no underlying basis and doesn't depend on anything, so assuming specific postures is just an unnecessary contrivance. Without the confidence that comes from resting as awareness, your awareness, which is naturally wide-open and spacious, will be constrained by wishful thinking about the

results of the meditation practice. If we follow such methods, we only blind ourselves to what's already here by believing that awareness is the effect of the cause of meditation. As awareness is already present and always accomplished, it is an error to expect it to be arrived at some time in the future.

In uncontrived awareness there's no need to have any special point of concentration, to have a special time-slot or special place, to put ourselves in a particular posture or to have any fixed reference points. All we need is to rest naturally as the awareness that underlies all appearances. Awareness is a seamless expanse that is naturally present everywhere; it includes everything and is within everything. There is no "someone" observing "something else," because in awareness nothing has been made into anything. The seer, the seeing, and the seen all appear and disappear within awareness—the changeless nature of all that comes and goes.

The uncontrived moment of resting as awareness is all-inclusive and embraces all of life. All thoughts, including the thought 'I,' appear and disappear within awareness, yet awareness remains unaffected by their appearance and disappearance. Awareness is not a subject or an object. It has no reference points, so no specific focus of attention is needed. The simple approach is to maintain flawless awareness in all situations without needing to focus on any circumstance in particular or to correct mental events. To be nondistracted by thoughts is the key point; we maintain flawless awareness while allowing all perceptions to be completely unrestrained, unrestricted, and unchanged. We don't try to neutralize anything in any way; we let the full force of the thoughts, emotions, and experiences have free reign, while resting as their underlying essence. We don't need a special kind

of hiding place in which to put thoughts or emotions—we face everything and just relax.

We can create a new definition of meditation: “the freeing of all of the mind’s constraints.” This means that everything that appears is seen as a form of pure awareness, and therefore no problems are found, and no constraints are necessary. Nothing is perceived as having ever been made into anything. The clear light of awareness has never been stuck anywhere. Within awareness—just like within stainless, flawless sky—there is nothing that’s holdable or keepable. One moment of instantaneous awareness brings more clarity than a lifetime of contrived meditation. That one moment of instantaneous awareness introduces us to that about ourselves that will never change. In this sense, every moment would be the ultimate meditation, no matter what the moment may contain.

Many of us are familiar with various types of meditation and may have been meditating for years. We’ve heard concepts that are associated with meditation like “extinction of mind” or “exhaustion of all phenomena,” and we may interpret these concepts to mean that we would no longer have any thoughts or emotions. That is a profound misunderstanding. The important thing isn’t in having no thoughts or emotions; it is instead in not being *distracted* by thoughts and emotions.

We can get into all kinds of sublime states in meditation, but they’re not completely free—they’re just states, and states are inherently temporary. Anything acquired through effort will eventually be lost, but our true nature is permanently with us and always will be. All the subtle refined states that are associated with spiritual practices—the non-conceptual state, bliss, emptiness, neutrality, or whatever it might be—are just points of view. There’s no need to take

up a point of reference anywhere, including rarified meditative experiences. To do so would severely limit access to awareness.

Bliss and suffering are equal. This can be realized only from the perspective of awareness. Don't attempt to obtain bliss or to reject suffering. By simply maintaining awareness, all is accomplished. Being attached to bliss or other meditative experiences constitutes suffering. Please don't let yourself be infected by the disease of striving for meditative experiences!

The conventional mind and all scientific pronouncements about it are just points of view; there isn't something called "the mind" that is a warehouse for points of view and that has a nature independent of awareness. An easy way to deal with the mind is just to see it as a point of view, and when thoughts about the mind come up, simply rest as awareness.

Even if there are the viewpoints of non-recognition of awareness, distraction by thoughts, or extensive elaboration on thinking, increasingly it will be realized that all of it is due to awareness and nothing else. The only freedom there is, is the freedom in the immediacy of perception, and this is not something that we arrive at through thinking about it, philosophizing about it, or meditating on it. All we need to do is rest imperturbably as awareness, and all mental constraints will subside.

Even if someone has meditated for decades, the demonstration of the full evidence of awareness in everyday life doesn't come about through meditation. Awareness is already accomplished. What is already so doesn't need a cause to bring it about as an effect; it's simply a matter of noticing that awareness is present in each perception.

Many people who have practiced meditation have reached the point where they've said that there is ultimately no need for meditation, because nothing is needed to establish what already is. They eventually conclude that all the thinking about and meditating on the nature of the mind is unnecessary, because the ground of mind is the absolute ground of everything, and in that sense there is no separation. It is already here and already realized. Everything that appears within the ground of everything *is* the ground of everything.

I'm not suggesting that if you love meditation you should give it up. If meditation is one of the practices you choose to do, that doesn't need to change, but you should know that meditation is not a means of getting you to a destination. If you think it's a means to a goal, that will create the idea that the destination of freedom is always somewhere away from you to be attained in the distant future, rather than being right here in this moment and already attained.

Just look at it this way: every appearance in awareness is a meditation. Whatever it is—getting a massage, climbing a mountain, making love, defecating—it's all meditation and it's all equal. By the power of resting as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, every experience is like being on a meditation cushion. In this simple practice is a natural movement to be involved in everything in a completely organic way; a new connectedness with all of life springs up that is free flowing and truly happy.

Q: Where should the mind be focused during meditation?

Candice: Nowhere. Just rest.

Q: Can meditation with a mantra be combined with practicing resting as awareness?

Candice: Let's put it this way: the ultimate mantra is complete rest. One of the meanings of the word "mantra" is "that which soothes the mind." So, if we're looking for what ultimately soothes the mind, we will find that it's in resting as awareness. Once that's understood, then mantra repetition can just be an enjoyable activity like any other activity, rather than a practice leading to a destination, because through rest we will have found the destination to be right here.

Q: You said we should rest in an uncontrived manner. I've been meditating for years, but I'm now trying to integrate that practice with resting. The problem is, when I meditate now, I feel like I'm forcing myself to rest in awareness, and this makes me doubt whether I should meditate at all.

Candice: What every meditator is ultimately looking for is to have the meditative state all day long—in all circumstances—and not just in a special circumstance, such as when one is sitting on a cushion. We're talking about completely uncontrived meditation that will pervade waking, dreaming, and sleeping. This can come about quickly or slowly through the introduction to awareness and the practice of short moments of awareness, repeated many times, until awareness is continuously obvious throughout day and night. The ultimate goal of meditation is to rest as awareness with complete equanimity no matter what is appearing.

Of course, most of us would want to arrive at that in the easiest way possible! Meditation should be an expression, in an easy and effortless way, of all-pervasive awareness. If we say we can only meditate when we're sitting on a cushion or if we're in a special place, then that's not necessarily true—it's just what we believe. In my own case, I didn't have a meditation practice where I would sit on a

cushion each day, but I did meditate in my own way, which was to rest imperturbably for short moments repeated many times in all circumstances and conditions. In that way meditation quickly became pervasive in waking, dreaming, and sleeping.

I am not saying that you shouldn't meditate. You're welcome to do whatever you like, but when you are meditating, just allow everything to be as it is, as you would in any other moment. Don't force anything—just relax. Whatever the thoughts, emotions, and sensations are, they're the unconfined capacity and creativity of awareness. They're inseparable from awareness, just as the brilliance of a diamond is inseparable from the diamond itself.

Initially, it may seem that there is awareness being aware of distracting points of view—similar to a cat watching a mouse. Yet, the more one rests naturally, the more one sees that awareness and points of view are inseparable. Even if we say, "I am resting in awareness, and a thought is appearing in awareness," both are points of view that have awareness alone as their basis.

There is no need to do any kind of one-pointed meditation like following the breath, thinking of certain things, visualizing a deity, gazing at a candle flame, or whatever it might be. Simply rest as awareness! Everything will then become more and more resolved, and it will become clearer that everything really is nondual by nature. If we say that certain conditions are necessary and awareness is dependent on conditions, it's going to be very difficult to realize that everything is a single nondual expanse, because we've placed conditions on it and said that awareness is dependent on something. Awareness is the basis of everything and depends on nothing.

Q: So, can we say that the goal of meditation is achieved when it makes itself useless?

Candice: Oh, I love it; that's music to my ears! What a profound expression of wisdom!

I'm not saying anything new about this subject. Throughout time, the ultimate meditation of imperturbable rest has been handed down from generation to generation, stretching through time like a chain of golden mountains. The lineage of everyday awareness is so pure that it has no lines. Awareness is super-complete in itself. It doesn't need to adopt doctrines, traditions, methods, special costumes, or locations, for it is the basis of all of these, and everything else as well.

The practice of resting imperturbably is for all people. It is not dependent on conditions such as age, intellect, education, gender, or location. We already are who we are, so why should we have to go through an ordeal of decades to be who we are? Resting as awareness is all that's needed. It is swift and sure!

Q: In some traditions it is taught that deep sleep is similar to meditation, but it is my experience that sleep is sleep and meditation is meditation, and that sleep has no relation with meditation. Could you shed some light on this?

Candice: Sleep and meditation are appearances that are equal to every other appearance, and all appearances have awareness as their root. It doesn't matter what it is—there is no "two." That's what nonduality means: there have never been two. Meditation means to rest as awareness, and when we just rest as that natural state, it becomes more and more familiar. As it becomes more familiar, we see that awareness is inseparable from everything. It's inseparable from

dreams, waking, and sleep, and inseparable from birth, life, and death. By recognizing this, we go beyond all the labels we've used to describe ourselves.

If we've been meditating for many years and we get lost in a non-conceptual state of no-self, bliss, emptiness or clarity, then it's possible we could stay in that state for years if we wanted to. Some people have disciplined themselves to stay in all kinds of states. We are here in India now, and this country is a wonderful display of that, isn't it? However, if we realize that states are nothing other than awareness, then we pass beyond being bound up in states. Beyond being bound in a state is the clear light of wisdom that requires no state. It doesn't ever adopt any extremes and is of tremendous benefit.

When we're all wrapped up in states, it is very difficult to address the very real problems facing the world, because the state we're in is probably suggesting to us that there *is* no world. If we're in one of those states, we've actually found an obstacle to awareness, even though it may feel much better than our ordinary points of view. We've adopted an extreme position, whereas awareness has no extremes. From the vantage of awareness, there is no position-taking of "the world exists" or "the world doesn't exist." There is solely the total presence of awareness here and now. If we truly examine the nature of what's appearing and don't try to describe it, we'll see that this statement is very apt.

A state is just more illusion—another mirage or dream. Being in some sort of state may make us feel better, it may benefit us personally, and we may even be able to convince ourselves that it is of benefit to everybody. But how much benefit could it be to everybody when millions of the world's people don't have a balanced diet, clean

water, or proper waste management? Beyond all these states is great wisdom that isn't tied to conceptual frameworks. This wisdom can say and do anything: it can move anywhere, it can be effortless and very fruitful in its benefit, and it doesn't have any ties or boundaries.

Q: I have been practicing a specific meditation for many years, have benefited from it very much, and I don't at all feel that I should give it up. Could you maybe explain to me what it is you are advocating in light of my practice?

Candice: That practice is good preparation for hearing this Teaching. Very often the minds and bodies of long-time meditators are already more at ease, so if they have the good fortune to be exposed to the teachings of resting as awareness, they can be fully present without needing to think over everything that's being said.

Some people may have been practicing different types of yoga for years—while someone else may have been dealing with being in prison for thirty years—but all these are practices. With most practices, we've trained ourselves to look at the contents of our mind and see some of it as good, and some of it as bad. Whether we're an ardent spiritual practitioner or someone who's practiced persistent wrongdoing, there is a continuous engagement in basing our actions on our thoughts and emotions. When we look for a teaching, we often look for one that agrees with our predetermined point of view that some things are good and others bad. This isn't the best approach when our goal is to gain confidence in awareness, because awareness is beyond such conceptual frameworks.

Some of us get very involved with the points of view appearing within our minds, and we say, "Oh no, I need to get rid of these negative points of view. I need to be pure in order to achieve Buddha-

nature!" Buddha-nature is nothing but a label for perfect clarity and extraordinary activities.

From the beginningless beginning of the great equalness of awareness, there's never been anything to change. There's never been any impurity anywhere. There's just complete openness, and in that spacious awareness, everything is informed by the wisdom that is naturally present and primordially pure. Amazingly, it is by the power of maintaining awareness without trying to correct mental events from bad to good that we find the wholly beneficial intelligence at the basis of everything.

If we're thinking that there is something impure or evil in us that can't be changed, then it's time to just relax as awareness and allow that point of view to resolve. This is the conclusion that Buddha himself came to. He had tried many practices, but finally he quit seeking and sat down under the Bodhi tree. And what happened? He let go of his previous practices and just rested as awareness. He didn't do that in any special way. Sometimes he stood up, sometimes he sat down, and sometimes he took a little snooze, but no matter what appeared, he rested with everything. He just let all of his thoughts and emotions have free reign, instead of trying to abandon, avoid, or alter them through all kinds of intensive practices as he had previously done.

All the fears, doubts, regrets, sexual fantasies, and everything else came up for him when he sat there. The ancient Buddhist scriptures refer to them as demons, but they weren't coming from outside, it was just his most intense stuff coming up. We all know what that's like, don't we? Have you ever sat in a meditation posture ready to have a great meditation, feeling so good about yourself, but then suddenly there it all is: *Playboy* magazine, fantasies about beautiful

movie stars or the person across the room, and the raging desires that come with the fantasies. Next you'll be thinking about the diamond ring you want, or the car, or where you want to live, or the kind of job you want, or what you should have taken when you were in school, or signing up for the next meditation retreat, and so forth!

Some form of this is what happened with Buddha under the Bodhi tree, but he just sat there and let it all happen, whatever it was. He didn't try to contain it or control it or change it. He stopped contriving completely, and then he just allowed everything to be as it was. He rested as the great equanimity that's the basis of all appearances. Then, resting as flawless awareness, he saw all *as* flawless awareness, until all *was* flawless awareness. When he had directly realized that the pure awareness that is the basis of all phenomena was his own true nature, he touched the ground and said, "This is it. I realize that all these things I've been trying to accumulate, change, or avoid are all just wisdom appearances and inseparable from the ground of all being."

The simplest of all practices is just to rest in an uncontrived way, because it integrates everything from the beginning without separating anything out. You don't need to drastically change your lifestyle. Just begin resting as awareness throughout the day, and swiftly you'll find that awareness will be increasingly evident in your life. The ultimate approach is effortless and all-inclusive awareness—it takes in all of life. If you just relax and rest again and again, conviction about that will dawn. You can count on this without fail.

Total Well-Being

Chapter Thirteen

"Most of us have never known that every single moment throughout night and day we are actually resting in complete well-being. There is never a single moment when we are apart from it, no matter what we are thinking, feeling, or experiencing."

Even when I was quite young, I had the strong conviction that there was something about life that was totally precious. Though no one spoke about it, that preciousness was obvious to me. I intuitively felt that if I could fully discover that preciousness, life would be wondrous. We would realize we were blended in preciousness and be able to live as that precious essence. Then there would just be a tender warm-heartedness with everyone. My mind would always be peaceful, and my interactions with others would be powerful, sweet, easy, and loving. Somehow, I knew this was possible.

As an adult, I discovered that what I'd thought to be true as a child is *absolutely* true! That way of living *is* possible, not only for me, but for every single person in the world. We *all* long for that perfect love and peace. We want that to be true, no matter how many other belief systems we may have taken on during our life. We long for every moment of our life to have the magical heartbeat of warm-heartedness and well-being.

Well, that's not only possible, it's already present within us. Regardless of how things may appear—whether positive or negative, spiritual or nonspiritual, afflictive or exalted—every appearance has the same well-being as its essence.

To have well-being doesn't mean that we'll only have pleasant thoughts and sensations. Throughout our lives we'll continue to have a

wide range of thoughts, emotions, and sensations, but true well-being comes from the fact that we are no longer ruled by them. They no longer define us or affect us, for we know them to appear in awareness, which has never been entangled in anything. When we are established in the practice of maintaining awareness, it remains obvious to us no matter what's going on. We no longer have the need to try to sustain it. Instead of being caught up in ordinary thinking all the time, our heart and mind opens up and we realize that everything is included within awareness, which remains unchanged and ever-free, no matter what appears.

When we just relax into the wide-open spaciousness that is the essence of our being, then we see something about ourselves that we may have never known before. Most of us have never known that every single moment throughout night and day we're actually resting in complete well-being. There is never a single moment when we're apart from it, no matter what we're thinking, feeling, or experiencing. However, to the degree that we believe that our thoughts and emotions have power over us, to that degree we won't be aware of the well-being that is always present. So, if we take ourselves to be apart from well-being, and affected by every thought and emotion that comes along, then that will be our experience.

The well-being of wisdom is not like the state of happiness sought by ordinary thinking. Following after thoughts, emotions, and experiences in order to find happiness isn't well-being at all. Following after thoughts is what we do when we *hope* for well-being, but this is a painful state to be in, because the hope is unending and ultimately unfulfillable. What's needed is to discover the well-being that's already present, rather than hoping for it to arrive in the future. The hoped-for

future never comes—but what is timeless and eternal is here right now.

Hoping for well-being comes from the simple fact that we want to feel good. Wanting to feel good may take many forms, such as wanting to be acknowledged, wanting to rectify a wrong, wanting to be healthy, wanting to find balance in life, and so on, but it all boils down to the same basic thing—wanting a life of well-being. Even people who are very egotistical, angry, abusive, and self-righteous just want to feel good. Everyone is just like us; they're no different. They want to feel good, and they don't want to feel crummy!

We search throughout our entire life for how to feel good. From the beginning, when we first learn from other people to rely on ordinary thinking, a lot of what we learn is to manipulate our thoughts and emotions in order to feel good. For example, as a child we may exhibit anger and hit another child, and someone will say, "That's bad! You shouldn't be angry and hit other people!" So, we think, "Ah-ha, being angry and hitting others is something that will get me in trouble. It's wrong and I must correct it." Another example would be that our parents usually teach us that we should avoid anger and replace it with good behavior: "Don't be angry; be nice to so and so."

The implication is that we need to contrive nice-ness even when we don't feel nice, so that we can get along with others and feel good ourselves. But even the nicest people on Earth will not find total well-being merely in being nice. There will always be something stirring in the background that isn't so nice—like death or critical illness, or some unpredictable emotion or event. "Nice" is just a label, and we can never find well-being in a label.

The manipulations of behavior we're taught in childhood never get to the essence of how to feel good, because they're just antidotes.

They're like putting a band-aid on a deep wound. Although we might gain a bit of understanding in a practical way about how to live life, using antidotes to thoughts, emotions, and other experiences isn't enough for real happiness. Strategies of manipulating thoughts and emotions will never make us permanently happy, no matter how much headway we might make with the thought-management programs that we institute. No matter how excellent we might believe these self-improvement programs are, we still don't feel good all the time, and having well-being all the time is what we want. Constantly sorting through our thoughts and trying to come up with good thoughts to replace the bad thoughts doesn't lead to happiness; it leads to a machine-like existence. We become 24-hour-a-day thought-sorters. That's not freedom—it's a life fit for a robot. Trying to replace bad thoughts and emotions with good thoughts and emotions is merely switching from one point of view to another, and that ceaseless agitation will never let us discover the non-agitated rest of total well-being. Within ordinary thinking there's no recognition of the indestructible reality of timeless wisdom, even though that reality permeates all points of view. When we're identified with our thoughts and believe we are the thinker, there will be no experience of wide-open awareness, which is the basic space in which both the thoughts and thinker appear and disappear. That primordial basic space is what we are, but through constant identification with ordinary thinking, we've forgotten the space of awareness. Clinging to the temporary parts, we've altogether forgotten the timeless whole.

It is impossible to bring about a permanent state of well-being from ordinary knowledge. Even if we knew everything there is to know in the realm of facts and science, that accomplishment would never bring about a permanent state of satisfaction or well-being, because

it's made only of temporary points of view. True wisdom lies in the capacity to not stray from awareness, and is gained only by the practice of resting as awareness. Rather than following after appearances, we continue resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times until the ease of being becomes automatic. In this way we gradually become fully familiar with awareness as the basis of perceptions. We become less and less identified with ourselves as being a separate entity stuck in a body, and discover our fundamental condition to be ever-free awareness that pervades and transcends all points of view.

As long as we're identified only with this soft animal body, it really seems kind of threatening, because it feels like we're trapped in it. There are always lots of people who will tell us that we came into existence only when we were born, and once we've believed that, we'll be afraid of this event coming up called death. If we think we're only the body, death may be a terrifying prospect.

Maybe we think scientific knowledge will help, so we immerse ourselves in facts of various kinds. But even if we could find out everything there is to know according to current knowledge about this vulnerable animal body and its psychology, are these conventional descriptions going to protect us from death? No matter what we've learned about ourselves, none of it has ever given us the total well-being that we want, because conventional knowledge overlooks awareness as the self-knowing aspect that is inseparable from the fundamental condition. It is awareness by which we know our own body and everything else; awareness is the primal root of all knowledge, existing prior to all thoughts, including the thought 'I'. Only in awareness can the well-being we're seeking be found, for that

alone is permanent, and that alone is our fundamental reality. This is the only true knowledge.

There's only one thing that will bring us complete well-being, and that is to know our fundamental condition—and this must be a lived experience. When we return to awareness again and again, we gradually gain familiarity with our fundamental nature. Then our thinking loses its fearful edges, and blooms into joyful well-being. In a totally uncontrived way we feel greater intimacy and connection with others. Our thoughts, when we notice them at all, are no longer so much about our own self-centered concerns; they gradually become more dynamic, more filled with energy, and more concerned with the life of everyone. We instinctively realize that everything truly is indivisible, and that no one is a stranger. We feel a natural intimacy with everyone.

We come to care very greatly about our planet and all the beings on it, and a very dynamic expression of compassion and wisdom comes alive in us and naturally flows into the service of all. We see wonderful solutions not only to our own problems, but to everyone's, and we naturally find the strength and courage to bring those solutions into manifestation.

This is what we really need to know about ourselves at this point in human history—more so than at any other time. We have always had people among us who have known the true nature of reality, but today is the first time in human history when many people are open-minded enough and also have the available information to fully realize our fundamental nature. In this truth lies the ability to solve our own problems as individuals and also the problems of our world.

How can that be accomplished? We need to get familiar with the essence that is at the basis of each of us as human beings. All solutions spring from that essence.

The well-being that we're always looking for can't really be found—because it's never been lost. We try to find it in a thought, but we can't find it there, because thoughts come and go, and we can't hold on to them, no matter how hard we try. If we say, "I'm only going to have happy, loving thoughts, and that's how I am going to find well-being," well, no one has ever been able to do that. The truth is that well-being already exists in everything—it exists in happy loving thoughts, but it also exists in negative thoughts, experiences, and emotions. All of these are comprised of the basic space of awareness, which is of the nature of happiness itself.

Primordial awareness is synonymous with peace; it is love itself. We tend to label our thoughts as good, bad, happy, or sad, and try to cling to those we like. However, the label is not the ultimate definition of anything. All things share the same essence. That essence of love and wisdom that is all-knowing and all-aware has never been trapped by any designation whatsoever. The essence of who we are has never been stuck anywhere and has never been made into anything. It is freedom itself, and always will be.

Q: This theme of well-being is really important to me, because it seems that I have so little of it! I have wild mood swings. One minute I'll be feeling okay, and the next I'll be in a dashing bad mood. This is made worse by the relationship I have with my partner who's also subject to fluctuating moods. I don't think I can find well-being as long as I have these wild mood swings or as long as I remain with this particular partner.

Candice: Let me give an example that may help you get a perspective on the moods you experience. I got a phone call this morning from someone who was telling me about all the troubles she'd had in the last few days. These were really significant things, so I just listened to her with love, and this is what she needed. I knew her pain was just an expression of awareness, and although I didn't say much, my ability to remain at rest with her story helped her to see her situation in a new light.

Prior to my shift in perception twenty-six years ago, I would have been very affected by having to deal with someone who had a lot of complaints. I would have thought, "Why do I have to listen to this?" My mood depended on outer circumstances and what other people were doing and saying, so it was constantly fluctuating. I would get up in the morning and think, "Oh no, not another day!" because I felt so victimized by my many moods and emotions. We've learned to give meaning to our moods, and this gives them more power. We'll say, "I'm in a mood today—watch out!" Or, if we've had enough of treating people badly, we might say, "Even though I feel awful, I'm going to act compassionately," but that's just adding an extra level of contrivance.

Twenty-six years ago I had a profound experience that led me to see that everything is completely equal and that there's no need to describe things in a particular way. Whatever is, *is*. It's all made of the same intelligent ground or condition. I saw that I didn't need to be ruled by moods. There's so much freedom and relief in that realization! Moods mean absolutely nothing; they're just like weather patterns that come through, and they have absolutely no effect whatsoever on our innate well-being.

It's much easier to just rest as awareness and let everything be as it is. No matter what appears, it's like a mirage. Like a line drawn in water, it is its own undoing and will vanish naturally. There isn't a single thing that needs to be done about anything that appears. We don't need anything to make the clouds go away; they disappear in and of themselves. They come from space, they are space during their duration, and they disappear into space. The space remains unaffected, and that's what we really are: aware pure space. The coming, staying, and going are all space as well. So, what can we say? There's nothing going on. There's nothing to react to. When we just let go in evenness, then life becomes a lot easier, and we don't need so much for anything to change. In letting everything be as it is, we open up to the space of profound insight and the ability to act skillfully. If we don't let everything be as it is by the power of resting as awareness, then we'll never be in touch with this level of insight and skill.

If we're in a contentious relationship with a partner, we can be like little video game warriors doing battle with each other based on our conflicting points of view. Every conversation is a new battleground! But if even one person in the relationship starts resting as awareness, then he'll know decisively that he doesn't need to get entangled or upset in his own points of view or the points of view of the other person. He no longer feels the need to defend or attack. Words that once seemed like bullets and bombs are now seen as harmless clouds passing overhead. Someone who is resting as awareness can remain in equanimity no matter what's being said, and can skillfully relate to the other person in the most compassionate and loving way possible. I'm not just talking about being nice. Compassion isn't necessarily nice, but it always has the result of love and benefit.

When I use the word “love” here, I’m not talking about love that depends on the “mood of love.” That isn’t real love; it’s what I would call “ordinary love.” If you need to have other people act a certain way in order for you to feel love for them, that’s ordinary love. If you feel you need to get love from somebody else, that’s ordinary love. I’m not talking about an ordinary kind of emotion. Real love, or perfect love, which is what I’m talking about, is equal to unwavering awareness. I’m talking about resting as the love that is the essence of everything. The basic space of everything that appears is immutable love, and whatever is appearing is its dynamic display.

But we won’t know that if we continue to describe everything with labels like “good” and “bad.” The only way we can know the omnipresence of perfect love is to rest and to allow all the descriptions to appear and disappear as they will. By knowing all of them to be equal they’re all transmuted into love and wisdom. It’s like the process of refining gold. We heat the unrefined gold, and the dross melts away, and then only pure gold remains. If we were to continue the refining process until even the gold melted away, then there would be nothing but pure space, and that space is equal to love. The decisive experience of the love at the basis of every appearance is true well-being.

Q: There has never been a person, circumstance, spiritual practice, or anything else that has ever truly given me well-being, and I despair of ever reaching the ideal you’re speaking about. Why should I think that what you are offering here will be any different from what I’ve tried before?

Candice: From the beginning of our lives we look everywhere for well-being. We begin by looking for it in the home we were born into, but

most of our homes and caregivers were not really able to provide well-being that we could count on. Pretty soon we began to look to things, such as toys and to all those make-believe worlds that we build in our imagination.—But we can't really find complete well-being there either, so we continue seeking. As we get older we look for it in involvements outside the family: school, friendships, relationships, higher education, the workplace, institutions, romance, food, or wherever it may be, but well-being somehow always escapes our grasp when we look for it outside ourselves. We're determined to find it, but most people have no idea how. Many people try various spiritual paths and practices, but for the most part they come up empty there too. Many go on looking for it until they eventually become too old and bitter to continue looking.

On a daily basis human beings are faced with all kinds of suffering, both in our personal lives and in the world around us. Suffering is everywhere, and is now more obvious and undeniable than ever, because we have instant forms of communication for blaring out the news about the incredible suffering all around the globe. Nonetheless, it *is* possible to discover real well-being. The way to that well-being is to easefully sustain awareness, for short moments, repeated many times. That's all that's needed.

This is what makes the Great Freedom Teaching distinctive. While most spiritual paths involve an attempt to purify or rearrange the contents of the mind in the hope of reaching a distant goal, Great Freedom teaches that you are already whole, and all that's needed is to identify with stable awareness rather than ordinary thinking. When that rest becomes automatic, a well-being is discovered that is beyond anything you could have previously imagined.

All of us have this precious opportunity in human life to enjoy the stability of awareness, but most of us don't even know that it's possible. Awareness is the basis of all perceptions, and in that basis there is absolute safety, absolute love, and total well-being. It is our true nature.

As we rest, more and more we see that not only are our personal points of view included within awareness, but *all* points of view are included. There is nothing to be rejected or excluded. It's only through seeing how much our attachment to certain points of view has caused our own suffering that we are motivated to maintain awareness—otherwise we really can't. We've all been taught that clinging to points of view will give us strength and happiness—but the truth is it only makes us weak and miserable. Only when we see this clearly can we be free of clinging to ordinary thinking and take real delight in stable awareness. When we understand how clinging to our own points of view has created the suffering in our lives, then we can immediately see that this is also true for everyone else. We see, wow, everyone else is just like me! Not only does this lead to natural care, concern, and compassion for everyone, it enables us to really help others, perhaps for the first time—and to cheer up! We see that human suffering all comes from the same root: attachment to points of view.

Our true identity is found in naturally stable awareness, and is found in gaining confidence in awareness as the basis of all perceptions. Awareness doesn't have any conditions at all, and it doesn't depend on your happiness or sadness or on whether or not you are seeking. In fact, in awareness, happiness and sadness are equal. To know this is to find the true caring that embraces all.

If that isn't your own experience, it can be—and if you rest for short moments repeated many times until it becomes automatic, it will be. At one time in my life I was torn apart by the same things you've been describing, because I'd just never learned anything different. I did not know how to attain stability in the complete relief I instinctively knew existed. Most of us have never had anyone say, "You don't have to suffer in this way." Once we begin to grow confident in awareness, we'll naturally know how to love ourselves and others. We begin by resting as awareness—that's the only way we can truly love ourselves. That's it; just rest. The efficacy of this simple instruction is profound beyond measure.

Only in this way can we really come to understand everything about ourselves and the world. When we rest as awareness, then we understand the true nature of ourselves and the world. We know what well-being is and where it's found, and we know what's real and permanent and what's temporary and fleeting. We also know all about our body and how to take care of it, and how to take care of our emotions too. We know about our thinking, and about everybody else's thinking and emotions, too. When we get familiar with ourselves as awareness, then we see clearly. We're able for the first time to really be with people in a natural way that's based entirely on true caring and concern.

There's never any reason for anything other than care and concern to appear, because, in the final analysis, love is all there is. Everything is saturated with the essence of well-being, and when we rest as that well-being, it flows through all of our actions. Care and concern in action always bring forth more care and concern. In this way, our own well-being can spread around the world, and reach everyone. We can be an example to others of the power of awareness.

The Personal Identity

Chapter Fourteen

"We have a very easy choice. It's the choice of continuing to describe and perpetuate stories based on an inaccurate perception of our identity, or getting to know the awareness that's the sole source and basis of all these descriptions."

Nature's intelligence never takes form in a permanent way. It remains pure space, no matter what appearances may come and go within it. The limitless expanse of awareness is the only "you" that has ever really existed, so know it to be yourself. No individual awareness has ever existed. The personal identity is just a point of view within the all-encompassing pure view of awareness. It takes itself to be something that is born, that goes through a life of waking, dreaming, and sleeping, and then dies. But the limitless awareness that is your true identity remains unaffected by any of that.

Once the personal identity has been taken to exist, all subsequent points of view that appear will then relate back to that personal identity, rather than to their authentic source— all-encompassing awareness— as the self-knowing phenomena of nature's intelligence. When we take ourselves to be an individual with a self-generated existence due to biological factors, we separate ourselves out from the single nondual expanse of nature. We think, "I exist as a separate entity, I'm substantial in and of myself, and everyone else is substantial too."

Each point of view we cling to substantializes our personal identity further. Most of us take our personal identity to be the conglomeration of all our past points of view. Unfortunately, those

personal histories can end up being the stories of endless conflict. We're automatically in conflict within ourselves and with others, because we are constantly involved in the grind of proving ourselves to be independently existent. We substantialize ourselves with points of view that we relate back to our personal identity, and then we compete with others and try to affirm our specialness and superiority. Separation is constantly being asserted, because we're fixed on an identity that's built on separation and split apart from the identity of others.

However, no one is anything other than a phenomenal manifestation of nature's intelligence itself. Infants don't have a sense of 'I', no matter what the conventional beliefs may be. At birth we have no sense of being anybody in particular, and we have no sense of anyone else being an independent entity either. Our way of seeing is completely wide-open. It takes years to develop a strong sense of 'I'. Have you noticed how young children will first refer to themselves by their name rather than saying 'I'? I noticed this with my own children and grandchildren. My grandson Jack was two or three years old before he ever used the word 'I'. He heard people referring to him as "Jack," so he would say, "Jack wants a piece of candy." He wouldn't say, "*I* want a piece of candy." Only later as he learned the 'I am the body' idea would he use the word 'I'.

If we hear over and over again from the time we're little that we are somebody, then that's simply what we get used to, and we come to believe it. After years and years of being told that we are a person, we conclude, "Yes, I have an individual identity; this body and mind is who I am." We learn object-oriented seeing through repetition of seeing things as separate objects and then defining and labeling them. This further substantializes our personal identity, making it the subject

of all those objects, and reinforcing our idea of all things as separate. This way of seeing comes about gradually rather than all at once. But just because we're told something over and over again doesn't make it true! It's just like someone saying, "The earth is flat," over and over again. People believed it for centuries, but that never made the earth flat.

The substantialization of a personal identity occurs thought-by-thought. This fixed personal identity is just made up—it's a complete fiction! The ultimate definition of the individual identity, like every description, is nature's intelligent ground. To get caught up in descriptions and what they mean is just endless folly.

Our real identity in awareness as the source of all our perceptions cannot be destroyed or affected in any way. This is very important to understand. Awareness is not generated by a human being. A human being is dependent on nature's intelligence for his or her own intelligence and has no independent nature that is separate or apart from nature. In resting as the awareness that is the source of each thought, it becomes more and more obvious that awareness is the only basis of the personal identity, and that awareness alone is what we need to identify with, rather than ordinary thinking that tries to prove the independent existence of the phenomenal world.

If we truly recognize that the personal identity is insubstantial and does not have an existence of its own, then it's much easier for us to identify with awareness and not hold on to the illusion of a personal identity. When, thought-by-thought, we make the most important choice to maintain awareness, rather than identifying with descriptions of a fragmented world of subjects and objects, then the reality of our true nature becomes obvious.

When we're living our life based on our points of view, all we will see are those viewpoints. We'll see ourselves as being the manager and controller of our identity, and we'll think it's up to us to defend and take care of it. The activities of our life are then all focused on defending and building up that identity, and this is a very exhausting and frustrating way to live. We're always trying to protect and guard ourselves against any kind of intrusion from anyone or anything, and ceaselessly attempting to change the nature of what appears in our mind. We feel we need to substantialize ourselves and then compete with others to show that our independent nature is better than theirs.

Once we are convinced that we have a personal identity, we'll have all sorts of fearful consequences associated with trying to protect and enhance it. We get lost in a lifestyle of hope and fear: hoping that certain things will happen and fearing that they won't, and fearing that other things will happen and hoping that they won't.

If we've included the idea of a spiritual or religious path as part of our personal identity, and are trying to purify ourselves to be a better person, then it's likely we'll be spending a lot of time doing that. Trying to get rid of an ego or other fictionalized identity is a lot of work—just like trying to flatten the earth would be a lot of work! In fact, it's impossible to get rid of the ego or personality, because it has no independent nature and doesn't exist as any kind of changeable thing! In order to realize our nature, we will have to come to the conclusion that we've never had an ego. Once we can do so, we will say, "Where is that individual I was working so hard to improve? I can't seem to locate the ego that I thought was at the control panel. There's nothing here but awareness!"

If we try to do something to perfect ourselves, or try to get rid of "the ego", then we'll always fall short of our goal, for there's no way to

get rid of something that isn't there. You can't get inside the mind and erase an ego that you think is there; the attempt to do so will give the fiction of an ego more power. As there has never been a personal identity that can be altered, all this involvement with fixing, improving, or eliminating it only leads to more belief in a personal identity! So, if we're examining our thoughts, emotions, and experiences and are trying to make them better, then all that involvement serves only to reinforce the conviction that we have a personal identity—and the fact is, we don't.

Our only true nature is infinite and unborn and belongs to nature's intelligence itself. It is completely free of notions of causality, time, and space. When we rest as awareness, we identify with the stable, underlying essence of all the biographical data that we have assumed ourselves to be. By the power of identifying with awareness, we will increasingly experience our essential nature. The seemingly solid personal identity gradually begins to be less substantial. For short moments repeated many times, we simply acknowledge our essential nature, and as we do so, that essential nature becomes more and more obvious.

We have a very easy choice. It's the choice of continuing to describe and perpetuate stories based on an inaccurate perception of our identity, or getting to know the awareness that is the sole source and basis of all these descriptions. When we rest as awareness and just allow everything to be as it is, we'll realize what wisdom is. We'll understand the true nature of existence. The clear light of wisdom begins to dawn in us, and we can start to laugh for having taken ourselves so seriously! If you think you are your mind, just relax. In that complete relaxation is revealed the naturally present awareness that is the mind's basic space.

If you remain convinced that you have a personal identity, then it might be helpful to look into where that identity might be found. Scientists have considered the question of where the sense of 'I' might be located, but no one has ever come up with a definitive conclusion. Is it located in the brain? No, we can't really say it's in the brain. Is it located in the heart or in any of the other parts of the body? No, we can't definitively find it in any of those places either. If we look into the cellular level of the body, or if we look through an electron microscope at the particles that make up our body, would we find the 'I' there? If we brought in your parents and showed them those particles, would they say, "Oh, look, there's our little girl!"? No. They would only see infinitely tiny subatomic particles moving at incredible speeds, emerging from space and then receding back into space.

Ultimately then, our personal identity is comprised only of space, and our 'I' emerges from the aware pure space that can be called "nature's intelligence." Everything, no matter what it is, is comprised of this aware space, which is equal to the timeless intelligence that is the ultimate nature of everything.

When we look into ourselves in this way, it leads to the joy of certainty that there has never been anyone here who is separate from awareness. This understanding debunks the whole idea of an individual subject who is separate from the whole. Soon we begin to see that there is nothing but an indivisible expanse of nature itself, revealing itself moment by moment in a continuous flow of whatever appears. Everything is a natural expression of nature, spontaneously appearing as its vast, amazing display. When we rest as the awareness that is the basis of the ability to know and comprehend all appearances, we gradually gain confidence in that awareness as being our own nature.

Q: I feel that I'm really caught up in judging myself and others all the time. For instance, when people walk into the hall, immediately my mind will go into overdrive with all these judgments about them. I see that this is a very negative trait, and I really want to give it up, but the habit is so ingrained. Can you help me with this?

C: When we see people, we tend to identify them by their characteristics: black skin, white skin, blue eyes, brown eyes, attractive, or unattractive, and we get all caught up in these descriptions about everything. We then make those descriptions into reasons to see everyone as separate from us. "This one is nice, that one is not nice, and these people I'm not even going to acknowledge, because they're everything I don't like!"

We strengthen our identity when we engage in subtle competition with everyone else. We want to prove that we're somehow better, or we end up envying others for the ways they seem to be superior. Through this process we develop disharmony and disunity within ourselves, and then naturally we develop disharmony and disunity with others.

Let's say a woman walks into the room, and you start to have thoughts about her. "Oh look, she has her hair in a ponytail. That's not very flattering, is it? I wonder where she got *those* clothes. And she doesn't have very nice skin, either!" Or, "She's so much prettier than I am. I'm so jealous!" The more identified we are with our personal identity, the more thoughts like this will arise. This is all part of the process by which we've created a false identity out of our points of view: our gender, name, hairdo, the clothes we wear, our age, or whatever it might be. We've come to believe that these things define who we are. If we haven't recognized awareness as the basis for all those perceptions about ourselves, we'll begin to substantialize

ourselves in this way. Then we automatically do the same thing with others. We judge and label whoever we see, and try to substantiate them by describing them and setting them up as either opposed to us or aligned with us. By this process we further affirm and solidify what we believe is our own independent nature.

However, none of us was born with a lot of opinions about ourselves and others. We weren't born knowing our name, gender identity, skin color, or nationality. We were born as we are: a phenomenal expression of nature's intelligence, with innate wisdom that never needs to hold to any description. We are all born and live with instinctive knowledge of our identity. Fixed ideas about what we take ourselves and others to be in terms of gender, age, outward appearance, politics, philosophies, and so on are completely unnecessary to our well-being and ability to skillfully function as a human. Indeed, the freer our perception is, the better.

As we relax more and more in our true nature, which is the pure awareness at the root of all our knowledge about everything, we look out at the world, and we don't even know how it happened, but everybody and everything starts looking a lot better! All these ideas we had about how solid and stable our personal identity is, and how solid and stable other people's identities are, start to fade. Our need to show our abilities and compete with everyone else just naturally slips away, without doing anything but maintaining awareness for short moments until it becomes automatic.

When we identify with awareness, we become caring, concerned, and compassionate in an uncontrived way, and this compassion naturally spills over on to everyone. More and more we see everyone through the eyes of wisdom. Wisdom is our natural way of seeing. It is awareness that is seeing, so the more we rest as awareness, the more

we see as awareness, and that pure seeing is synonymous with love, wisdom, and energy. More and more we find that we are cheering up!

As we begin to maintain full and stable awareness more and more, our ordinary way of thinking about things gradually shifts. Instead of all the obsessive thinking about “me,” “my stuff,” and “how am I going to live,” it all loosens up. We still love those who are close to us, but we don’t desperately need our sympathetic attachments to people in order to identify ourselves or to be happy. Our thinking and emotions become involved in a very natural way in what will be of benefit to all. Rather than just thinking about ourselves and what will benefit us, through the ultimate self-benefit of identifying with awareness, we automatically want to be of benefit to others.

We see how suffering is caused by clinging to a personal identity and taking it to be real. When we realize that we have fooled ourselves in this way, we feel such a deep connection with everyone and so much compassion and true caring. When people are lost in themselves, they don’t usually think about the suffering of others, because they’re too busy with their own issues. But when we have understood the single root of the suffering we all share, then we can’t help but respond to all the things that have caused suffering in the world.

The greatest power that any human being can have lies in the wisdom of open and complete awareness. When we find ourselves thinking with compassion about the well-being of everyone, well, that is just a very wonderful way to be. It’s a very beautiful development! This isn’t a compassion that can be cultivated or gained; it’s already contained within awareness. Nothing special is needed; it is already accomplished. All we need do is gain confidence in awareness by

resting repeatedly for short moments many times until it becomes spontaneous. This one simple change is the solution to all problems.

If we try to contrive special circumstances in order to familiarize ourselves with awareness, then we won't realize that our present situation, whatever it is, is the constant spontaneous flow of awareness.

Q: I find it very difficult to believe that we shouldn't try to improve the faults we find in ourselves. I feel that people need to put forth effort to improve; otherwise, they'll never become any better.

C: If we take ourselves to be a personal identity, and the desire arises to find out about the true nature of our being, very often our starting point is the assumption that there's something wrong with our personal identity. "I need to improve my flawed personality and purify my mind." But as awareness is flawless from the beginningless beginning, there is nothing within awareness that has ever been flawed. To try to analyze and transform a personal identity that doesn't exist only perpetuates the idea of a personal identity.

When we repeatedly return to awareness, wisdom naturally dawns within, and it requires no contrived activity, conduct, thinking, or emoting. Wisdom is inseparable from the basic space of awareness that pervades everything. Everything you're trying to change is an appearance of that wisdom! Only in realizing this to be the case are faults exhausted and qualities perfected in timeless wisdom. The perfection of qualities cannot be contrived. Our own wisdom is innate and already accomplished; we don't need to do anything to get it—it already is! When we rest as the awareness that's at the basis of everything, the clear light of wisdom becomes more and more obvious. We can count on this without fail!

It doesn't matter what kind of life you've lived. You can be the worst person on earth and have done horrible things, or you can be the greatest person who's ever lived—or somewhere in between—it really doesn't matter. You don't have to be smart or educated or spiritual or anything at all. Awareness is naturally present in everyone. It is that by which we know we exist. We wouldn't know of our own existence or of the existence of the world without it. It's the root of all knowledge. By sustaining awareness for short moments until it becomes continuous, you realize that the perfection of qualities is inherent in wisdom, and not in contrived actions to try to change thoughts, emotions, conduct, and experiences. The exhaustion of faults and perfection of qualities is automatic in increasing identification with awareness.

Most of us have never heard anything other than that we are a personal identity, and for want of better information, we've believed it. We might have received an introduction to the possibility of something beyond the personal identity, but very rarely are we in a circumstance where the key points and pivotal instructions are present that can unerringly direct us to the complete certainty of awareness.

Q: Being put down by other people is quite difficult for me, but in my office there's a lot of backbiting, gossip, and criticism by the people I work with. I don't want to change my job, but I find the environment there intolerable at times.

Candice: Many of us have a belief system that holds that no one should put us down, and that our self-esteem will be wounded if someone does so. We're convinced that we'll be affected negatively if someone puts us down, so we aren't going to allow anyone to do that.

We want to maintain our self-esteem and sense of importance, and we feel threatened by criticism.

But let's say one day it happens: somebody puts us down, and we get all fired up about it. It's like we had put out a big sign that said: "No Trespassing! No Putting Down Allowed!" But behold, we find a trespasser has ignored the sign and insulted us! We may hear that someone has said something really negative about us behind our back, and not only that, what he said wasn't true! All of a sudden we're enraged: "How dare he? I'm going to call him up and let him know what's going on, and then I'm never going to speak to him again!" Maybe we'll even think about punching him or hurting him in some other way. No matter what we end up doing, we'll be completely distracted, because we're following after each angry thought. This kind of ordinary thinking presents alternatives for action based on pride and self-importance, and the actions come from a very limited way of looking at things. And if we follow through on any of our plans, the result will be easily predictable: we'll have a small war on our hands!

Of course, there may be times when we need to speak to someone about what he or she has done, but if we can rest as awareness rather than jumping up to defend ourselves, we may start to see that there are other ways of viewing the situation. Many options exist other than feeling hurt and then retaliating. This is very important, because only in this way can we see that thoughts and emotions need not have power over us. Only then do we begin to have a broader vantage, and the only way we can possibly have this balanced view is through the decisive experience of awareness as the basis of every one of those thoughts and emotions. They are the vivid appearances of this intelligence and nothing more. If we give them a substantial existence in their own right, we can't possibly have the

wide-open and spacious vantage that's necessary for true problem solving.

Instead of going into this spiral of hurt feelings and vengeful responses, we can simply rest as awareness and enjoy the complete equalness of everything, without any need to hold on to the descriptions flashing through our minds. What can the descriptions give us? They give nothing but pain and agony. What does resting as awareness give us? Complete relief and the ability to act skillfully.

So, the choice is very simple!

When we maintain awareness, we'll soon find that we're much more interested in maintaining the peace and wisdom of the equalness of awareness than we are in defending ourselves from put-downs. We'll come to see that our true identity needs no defending, and cannot be hurt by anything. Instead of perceiving the person's action as an attack, perhaps we'll be able to see it as a harmless appearance within awareness, and respond with skillful wisdom instead of retaliating. We may even find gratitude in our heart for the person's action, which has been an invitation to sustain awareness, and a precious reminder to not identify with our ordinary thinking.

For you it may be difficult to deal with being put down, for another person it may be dealing with jealousy, for someone else it may be facing anger, desire, pride, or fear. But whatever it is, just rest as awareness without wavering, and allow primordial wisdom to flower. When we rest as awareness in the direct encounter with any of these perceptions, incredible wisdom blossoms on its own. In this self-liberation from pride, jealousy, anger, desire and fear, wisdom-awareness reigns—and in that pure mirror, we can finally see our true face.

The Mind is Gifted

Chapter Fifteen

"One term we could apply to the ability to access the full capacity of the mind is "giftedness." However, it is my feeling that giftedness is something that is inherent in every mind, rather than being a quality limited to certain individuals and determined solely by genetic or environmental factors."

At some point we've all probably read an article on science or psychology that claimed that people generally use only ten percent of the capacity of their brains. It may be ten percent or one percent, we can't say for sure, because a percentage of an unknown quantity can't be determined. Regardless of the percentage, studies on this question have all similarly shown that the brain is underutilized.

One possible explanation for the brain's underutilized capacity is that we've simply been clinging to the small percentage of the mind that we're familiar with, unaware of our innate ability to explore the vast potential within ourselves. Maintaining awareness for short moments repeated many times is the means whereby a person can access the capacity of the brain that has gone unused. When a person chooses to sustain awareness in an uncontrived way, they are actually choosing to access the unused capacity of their brain.

The truth is that we are accustomed to using our minds in a certain way, which for many of us might be a very repetitive and limiting way. We think that this is the only way to use our mind, but when we familiarize ourselves with awareness as the basis of the mind's ability to perceive—that aspect of our mind which has no outside or inside, no dimension, and no characteristics which can be found to exist in their own right—we then discover a whole new

capacity of the mind. Once we know this is possible, we can make a conscious choice. Do we choose to be limited by a mind ruled by habitual thought patterns, or do we choose to gain confidence in awareness and thereby discover what has hitherto gone undiscovered?

To facilitate this discovery, we should ask ourselves: “Where do the appearances within my mind come from? Where are they now, and where do they go?”

The truth is that all phases of the appearance of thoughts—the appearing, the staying, and the going—occur only within awareness. However, in stable awareness itself, which is what the mind *is* in its ultimate sense, there is never any transition or change. The more deeply we examine our minds, the more we will see that just as mist arises in the sky and dissolves back into the sky, appearances arise in the mind and vanish back into it. The perceptions are the dynamic capacity of awareness—that and nothing more. Whatever appears within the mind is a form of awareness; the forms come and go, inseparable from awareness, but awareness itself remains unchanged. Mind and awareness are completely synonymous.

One term we could apply to the ability to access the full capacity of the mind is “giftedness.” However, it is my feeling that giftedness is something that is inherent in every mind, rather than being a quality limited to certain individuals and determined solely by genetic or environmental factors. I was convinced from early in life that we all have incredible capacities, and if we could find a way to tap into those capacities, then they would become more and more obvious in us—and I was sure this was true of everyone. I grew up as a gifted child, but I never saw myself as different from anyone else, only as someone who had access to a capacity that everyone else also had as well; the only difference was that some people didn’t know they had it.

Why is it that some people seem lethargic and unhappy, while others are so filled with vitality and brilliance? It is because the people who are exhibiting power and exceptional qualities like compassion are fully alive and have tapped into the essence of awareness. It doesn't have only to do with being unique or special or gifted; it just has to do with the ability to access the true nature of the mind.

There has never been anyone who has realized the wider range of the mind who hasn't said that this wider range is actually the province of everyone. Whatever one mind can do, every mind can do in maintaining stable awareness. Even though we typically look at things in terms of differences—saying that this person is intelligent and that one is less so—in fact it is more of a matter of one person being better able to access what is available to all.

One thing I've noticed among people who are gaining familiarity with awareness is that they develop an extraordinary speed in processing information, and that they're able to have a rapid and thorough comprehension of an idea or concept. There is a dramatic increase in the ability to perceive essential elements and underlying structures and patterns in relationship to ideas. Such people find that they have an increased ability to see models and systems that previously weren't perceived.

There is also an increased ability to perceive many sides of an issue, in other words, to have a balanced view. When only using a limited capacity of the mind, there might be the tendency to take one-sided positions. Through maintaining awareness, the ability is developed to let go of fixed reference points and to look at an issue from all angles. One no longer gets so emotionally inflamed because of the need to substantialize oneself through identification with certain rigid opinions.

As people become more familiar with awareness, an attentiveness to detail develops that didn't exist before. As their practice deepens, even people who have considered themselves scattered and unable to focus on anything will naturally develop this attentiveness. It is not as though they are trying to be more organized or have brought in an organizational coach—the skill just comes about naturally. There is greater and greater awareness of detail and the ability to master one's internal and external environments.

Other characteristics that I see are the development of an unusual capacity for memory as well as a long concentration span, and an increased interest in ideas and words, coupled with a more extensive vocabulary.

There is an increased precision in thinking and expression, as well as an ability to relate to a broad range of ideas and synthesize commonalities among them. One develops a greater ability to think abstractly, to deal skillfully with complex issues, and to find myriad possible meanings in even the most apparently ordinary issues or problems.

One also demonstrates a higher degree of emotional sensitivity. This stems from a real caring for the feelings of others that comes when people no longer need to protect and guard themselves from other people and from the world. Instead of being so guarded and focused on attachments to oneself and one's immediate family, those attachments are loosened up and released to include everyone—the whole world and all beings in it. These are really beautiful intrinsic aspects of the mind.

When there is complete confidence in awareness, unusual intensity and depth of feeling come about. The intensity and depth of feeling that have been kept at bay come up in full force, and in that is

great physical, mental, and emotional energy. When we move beyond the limited scope of the mind into the infinite expanse of pure awareness, then tremendous energy is released. All of the capabilities I have described are the byproducts that come along with this release of energy. Extraordinary energy and zest for living are coupled with an irrepressible desire to contribute and be of benefit, not just on a small scale, but on a broad scale.

Lastly, in terms of morals and ethics, morality and ethical behavior are ingrained and inherent in awareness in a way that is much more profound than contriving them. Through gaining familiarity with awareness, those qualities are discovered to be our own essential nature. People might have previously needed to have someone tell them what to do and what not to do, and felt that they had no self-authority in questions of morality. However, through awareness people become more autonomous and self-reliant in terms of making decisive ethical decisions. They have profound insight into social and moral issues in a way that they didn't before.

These are all things usually thought to be characteristics of extremely bright people who are at the upper echelons of the IQ scale. But we find that people who become familiar with awareness have an ability to learn in an integrated, intuitive, and nonlinear manner that helps facilitate these abilities. When we see these characteristics beginning to appear in numerous people through the simple practice of gaining confidence in awareness, the implication is that high IQ is simply the ability to access the unused capacity of the mind.

The next great frontier of human endeavor will be in the discovery of the full and complete capacity of the mind. Pioneers of the mind will come to the fore in the next ten years who aren't even known now, and due to their work, the greater advances that will be

made in science and other technologies in the coming decades will occur via this new frontier of the mind. The means to discover this new frontier will become the most valued knowledge on the planet. Whether it's in relation to business or to everyday life, it will become something that everyone wants. When people find out what the capacity of the mind is, that will be what they want, and they will be willing to go to any lengths to know more about it and experience it themselves.

This is a very important time in history, and it's essential to know that we're on the brink of a new frontier, and that there are people who are or will become expert guides into the new territory. We desperately need people with wise and helpful minds to be at the forefront of all fields, and we need people who know that the purpose of the mind is to benefit themselves and others. These are the people who need to be in the forefront of human life and who should be trusted as our leaders, and more and more they will be. They are going to radically influence human culture and the evolution of humankind, for the simple reason that they will know the connection between the part of the mind that is used habitually and the part that isn't usually used at all.

This application of the wise and helpful mind will be especially important in terms of guiding the future direction of scientific research. The current scientific model sees nature as a kind of encoded intelligence that is being decoded by human beings, and that now we are recoding that intelligence to some degree in order to cure disease or improve life in general. Of course, this is an interesting pursuit; however, the decoding, encoding, and recoding implied in this belief system is only being done with a fraction of the brain's capacity and within a limited context of the nature of existence. Although there

have been many incredible advances in science, many of these advances are not occurring in harmony with the greater capacity of the mind, and they do not necessarily provide the greatest benefit to the planet and its inhabitants.

We are now at a similar point in the understanding of the mind and its capacities as we were about two decades ago with the understanding of computer interfaces. In 1990 there was almost no easily accessible interface between computers and human beings, so computer technology was really at a primitive level compared to what we have now. In the meantime of course, we've seen incredible advances in this area. Similarly, in the near future we will experience great leaps in the understanding of the tremendous capacities of the human mind, and the interface between its used and unused capacities.

To get to the root of these capacities, we have to ask ourselves what the most important function of the mind is. I have looked up the words 'mind' and 'brain' in different dictionaries, encyclopedias, and literature on neuroscience and found many very erudite definitions there; however, I couldn't find anything in these sources that pointed to a definition of the mind as something which would contribute to greater human happiness or the immediate benefit of the planet. I thought to myself, "How are all of these scientific definitions of the mind and brain useful in terms of filling the world with wise and compassionate people who use the full capacity of their mind?"

We as human beings need to maintain sovereignty and self-authority over our minds and should not blindly turn over the definitions of what the mind is to those who specialize in only a partial understanding of it. We need to go beyond tired definitions and discover for ourselves, in a new way, the true nature and the real

purpose of our own mind. More and more we are seeing people who are expressing that self-authority, who are going beyond what is ordinarily thought to be possible, and who are tapping into an extraordinarily beneficial nature that exists inherently within every human being. For people whose purpose in life is inherent human goodness that is wise and helpful, the question becomes: “Who am I really? What is my role on Earth, and what am I meant to be doing? How can I be of benefit to myself and others? What is my real potential?” These are crucial questions that human beings need to ask.

It really doesn’t matter what kind of philosophical theories we have—it all boils down to what is going to make people happy, fulfilled, and beneficial, and what won’t. What will show us the innate dignity and confidence that are expressions of nature’s intelligence? The world is seeing some very important advances that will enhance humankind’s ability to innovate and progress technologically and scientifically. Yet, it is even more crucial to apply these advances in ways that allow the Earth to be taken care of properly and in ways that move people towards being happier, wiser, and more caring. Not only does everyone want this in their heart of hearts, but this is within our actual capacity as a species.

We need to be willing as individuals and as a species to go beyond what we know about ourselves and find out what we don’t yet know. We really have to have the humility and the courage to do that. That means leaving behind all conventional frameworks that we might have had about our mind and body, and gaining confidence in what has until now been unknown. When we maintain awareness, we approach everything in a relaxed way, and then we don’t need to be so wrapped up in conventionality or our usual ways of doing things. We can just let things be as they are, and that stance immediately

broadens our outlook. We discover the balanced view that is already present. To the degree that we are committed to the goal, to that degree, we will be able to use our minds to achieve it.

Q: I was interested to hear you say that you were a gifted child, as I had also been given that label at a young age, and I've always been interested to know what "gifted" means exactly. Did you notice anything in your development as a gifted child that might have been a factor in your later life or which might have influenced your outlook and teachings?

Candice: Yes, I did indeed. I can speak to one particular incident that really had a formative affect on me. When I was a young girl, I was exposed to the thinking of Albert Einstein, and I read a quote from him that really stuck in my mind: "The thinking that created a problem can't solve the problem." I was completely intrigued by that statement, because I could see that a lot of problems—whether they were personal problems or the problems of the world—came about due to people's habitual thought patterns. This idea that there could be a different way of thinking that could solve problems became very interesting to me.

Sometime later on, I was given a homework assignment that entailed writing about how it was that everything in the world was in motion. The answer that the teacher expected was that the earth is rotating on its axis, and that its movement sets everything else into motion, but that wasn't the answer that I had. I wrote in my assignment that everything was moving because all the molecules and subatomic particles are moving, and that they are moving within space. In the process of writing my assignment I had another insight that really stopped me in my tracks: I recognized that the particles

that are in such constant motion are never anything other than limitless, intelligent space, and that they are comprised of space. I could see that somehow it was impossible for anything to ever come to an end, just as it was impossible for anything to ever begin.

I turned in my homework assignment, and I didn't know what to expect. In class the teacher started talking about the rotation of the earth and how everything was moving due to that, and I thought, "Oh well, he has a different idea about things," but I was still totally convinced about the insight I had.

After the teacher read my paper, he mentioned to me that he really liked it, and that even though he had a different answer, my insight was actually an excellent one. He told me I was very smart, and he had an interesting opinion about being smart: he felt that one of the great things about being intelligent is that a person could be of benefit to other people. He said that being intelligent did not have to be something that was only self-focused, but that using that gift in the proper way could be of great benefit to everyone. He also told me that by helping others I would also help myself. So, in one fell swoop he oriented my thinking towards wanting to be of service, and this was one of the most important things I learned in my early life.

My school eventually recommended that I be placed in a gifted program, and I went to another school where the gifted program was offered. I began studying Latin, the Yale New Algebra, and many other things that my peers didn't have access to. However, I felt very strongly that whatever this intelligence was that I and the other gifted children had, everyone else also had a similar intelligence, but somehow they hadn't yet tapped into it. I could see how one could tap into innate intelligence and see things in a different way by going beyond conventional thinking.

I could also see that this intelligence was naturally occurring and that it wasn't something that needed to be invented or discovered. If one could go beyond conventional thought, one would then be able to begin to see things in a more profound and balanced way. I was interested in how this natural intelligence could be of immediate benefit in one's personal life and also help solve big problems in the world. I really didn't know how to apply these intellectual insights to my personal life in other than very limited ways, but over time this focus on finding ways to be of immediate benefit became extremely important in my life and eventually became its focus.

However, it became clear to me that, although sometimes the way people tried to solve problems resulted in improvement, the overall thought processes being used were generally leading to quite painful or even catastrophic conditions. As I moved into my young adult years, there were issues like the Vietnam War, political and corporate corruption, and environmental degradation that were very much on people's minds, and I wanted to know how the desire to be of immediate benefit could be utilized so that things like that would be remedied and reversed. It seemed to me that even though there was some headway made in solving these big problems, there was never enough momentum generated to reverse the negative trends. In fact, the trend was that the environment became more degraded, and more and more conflicts popped up around the world.

In my late twenties and early thirties, I reached a very critical point in my own thinking, because I saw that all the conventional knowledge that was available to me provided very little in terms of my immediate betterment and well-being, particularly in light of what I felt was possible for human beings. When I realized that, I reached a crisis in my life, and I knew definitively that I needed something within

myself that would be of greater support. I could tell that I needed to go beyond everything I knew at that time, even though I'd already had quite a few deep insights. I entered into a period of what could be called despair and bewilderment, because my intellectual, psychological, and spiritual attempts at solving problems provided no real and lasting solutions.

It was when I was in this state of despair and bewilderment about my own lot in life and the lot of all of humankind, that I suddenly realized that all of these mental processes had the same origin. I saw that their source condition was an intelligence or space that is entirely conscious and aware. It could be called nature's intelligence. I realized that all of the activities of the mind are in a certain sense entirely equal, because they had as their source this intelligence that is innately perfect and pure. Everything is a manifestation of that intelligence, and everything that appears within it has never been anything other than that intelligence. That insight brought an incredible sense of relief, because I was able to relax my mind into that aware and conscious intelligence and draw on the power of its balanced view.

It was clear to me that not only are my thoughts, emotions, and experiences appearances of this intelligence, but also that all phenomena whatsoever are appearances of that intelligence. I could see, just like I did when I was a young girl, that this intelligence or space—even though it is experienced as an individual intelligence or space in a human being— isn't located only within one's body. It doesn't have any kind of perimeter, boundary, or location to which it is limited. It simply *is*. I came to the insight that there is an aware or conscious intelligence that is unchanging, indestructible, and all-pervasive.

I could see that any knowledge that I had was already naturally present within this intelligence, but that the intelligence would likely not be recognized in one's experience unless one allowed oneself to do so by resting the mind for short moments repeated many times. The primary characteristic of this aware intelligence that pervades all is that it is of immediate benefit. The benefit is first recognized in realizing that this intelligence has complete mastery over all thoughts and emotions, including those that we experience as troublesome. By discovering conclusively that this innate intelligence as expressed in our awareness or consciousness is already a ground of complete benefit, it becomes possible for human beings to have complete psychological well-being, compassion, and skillful qualities and activities that benefit all. This was the eventual fruition of the insight I had when I was a young girl.

Exhausting Faults and Perfecting Qualities

Chapter Sixteen

"When we simply acknowledge it, awareness becomes more and more obvious. Since the nature of our being is entirely free, it is completely uncontrived, so we don't have to do anything to be our natural and genuine being. We already are that genuine being, and in it the perfection of all qualities is ever present."

Conventional standards are such that behaviors are often labeled as either good or bad. Having accepted and adopted these values, we scrutinize our own behavior and compare it with this conventional standard. We then strive within ourselves to exhaust our faults and perfect our qualities. Though humankind has been going about this very effortful process for millennia, at this point it should be obvious that all of this striving hasn't worked. If it had, we'd not only have a much better sense about how to handle situations in our individual lives, collectively we'd have a much better understanding of how to deal with the grave problems that face us as a species.

There are four methods that are generally used in handling what are considered to be faults. The first method is to indulge the fault. Let's say an emotion like anger comes up, which is something that's traditionally been labeled a fault. With the indulgence method we just give in to the anger and act from that angered state. We feel angry, so we blow up and say or do angry things.

The second way of dealing with faults is to avoid them. In this case, we hope that through avoiding the thoughts, emotions, and situations that tend to bring the anger to the surface, the anger will go away. In doing so, we may steer clear of our anger for a while and in some ways neutralize it, but its true nature is never seen or

transformed, and it remains lingering in the background ready to spring forth at any moment.

The third way of handling afflictive states such as anger or fear is to try to replace what we think of as our negative impulses with something positive. For instance, we may attempt to replace negative thinking with positive thinking, or negative emotions with positive emotions. We might replace criticizing and gossiping about other people with thinking and speaking well of them, or instead of being angry with people we might try doing charitable work to assist them.

The fourth way of handling afflictive emotions is to rest as flawless awareness, seeing all *as* flawless awareness, until all is seen to *be* flawless awareness. This is the only approach of the four that actually works to exhaust faults and perfect qualities. As we rest when a fault arises, what was once seen as a fault is discovered to actually be nothing but a form of flawless, primordially pure awareness, and in that pure seeing, the fault is transformed into a positive quality. When we're able to see faults as evanescent forms of pure awareness, we discover their inherent nature, and this is the only way that faults can be permanently exhausted. Only when we see a fault's underlying essence will we know its true nature. In the direct encounter with a fault or afflictive state as it appears, one maintains flawless awareness until all appearances are seen as flawless.

In that pure seeing, what was once perceived as threatening and harmful is now discovered to be inseparable from the primordial purity of all-encompassing awareness. The discovery is made that the faults themselves are actually pure, in that they are the natural appearances of the basic space of pure awareness. Whatever is perceived is in fact timeless awareness and has the qualities of timeless awareness. When a fault is perceived, that too is timeless awareness. This is a major

pivotal instruction: all mental and sensory appearances are free in their own place as awareness, even as they are directly encountered.

This is what it means to rest naturally: to rest in a completely uncontrived way with whatever appears, maintaining flawless awareness for short moments repeated many times until all appearances are seen to *be* flawless awareness. There is no division at all between awareness and its appearances—they are a single nondual expanse. Rather than taking the appearance to be something in and of itself, we recognize and transform it by the power of resting naturally. In this way, we realize everything to be of the nature of awareness. When afflictive states come up, it's absolutely essential to rest as the awareness that is the source of that afflictive state, without indulging it, avoiding it, or trying to replace it with something else. The key is simply to continue resting.

When we live our lives in conventional ways, we won't really know what to do about our faults. We'll just keep trying to avoid them or replace them, and despite that we often find ourselves indulging them. We don't know any other way. We don't know that it's possible to rest our mind and not elaborate on thoughts and emotions or get caught up in impulsive action. Many people today are looking for an answer; they know that there's a better way to be. They know that as human beings we need to take essential steps to save the planet we live on, and many people now understand that the first step has to be taken within.

By resting the mind imperturbably and maintaining complete perceptual openness, we realize the natural state of awareness. In that, all qualities are perfected. The naked state of awareness brings about perfection of all qualities, not only in a philosophical sense, but in a very practical sense as well. As we go about our lives in

imperturbable rest, we know what to do and how to act, and we don't need to obsess about decisions and choices anymore. We find that the true nature of faults is unchanging and utterly stable, and their domain is awareness's own naturally free manifestation. Whatever appears within awareness is by nature inherently pure. All faults are like this; all afflictive states are inherently pure. When seen clearly, all faults are found to be imperturbable rest. We rest in the immediacy of perceptions.

We find that what once seemed to be a deficiency is seen more and more as an appearance of true wisdom—the sun of awareness shining as that fault. Points of view, including faults of whatever kind, are the dynamic energy of pure awareness, and are inseparable from awareness. There's no way to separate out the sunlight from the sky; similarly, faults cannot be separated from the basic space of awareness. When we take the faults to be something in and of themselves—as having an independent nature—then we feel preoccupied or even compulsively driven to either indulge them, avoid them, or replace them. On the other hand, when we rest as awareness and see the faults as inseparable from awareness, then they are seen as the primordial purity that has always been their underlying essence.

When resting as awareness becomes predominant in our lives, all qualities are naturally perfected without anything needing to be done. All we've been attempting to do through indulging, avoiding, and replacing is found in awareness. Awareness isn't something that can be cultivated or developed; it is inherently present within us and is naturally occurring without any effort. As we are only the dynamic energy of timeless awareness and nothing else, we are by nature primordially pure. Thus, if effort is made to perfect ourselves, then we are off course, because the truth is we are *already* perfect; what is

perfectly pure needs no efforting. Understanding this is crucial to our own well-being and to our capacity to act in the world in an easeful, powerful, contented, and beneficial manner.

As we rest, things fade without anything needing to be done about them. There is complete freedom in perceptual openness and immediate perception. This freedom is completely beyond time, beyond doing and effort, and beyond trying to achieve something. When we simply acknowledge it, awareness becomes more and more obvious. Since the nature of our being is entirely free, it is completely uncontrived, so we don't have to do anything to be our natural and genuine being. We already are that genuine being, and in it the perfection of all qualities is ever present.

What does all this mean exactly? It means that when we rest as awareness, we find mental stability and clarity. The faults that we've associated with the activity of the mind are exhausted, and the qualities that are inherent in the basic space of our mind are enhanced. Instead of being obsessively preoccupied with self-centered fears, we're occupied with being of benefit to others and ourselves. It's not a matter of trying to be of benefit in order to prove that we're somebody. Rather, it's a natural desire to be of benefit that's inherent in the mind. It's not a need to feel better about ourselves, but rather the natural outpouring of a human life in compassionate service to all.

It's very simple: as long as the mind is all wrapped up in "I, me, and mine," we can know for certain that this is the conventional activity of the conceptual mind. When the mind is no longer wrapped up in the activity of "I, me, and mine," we can be sure that the activity of the mind is rooted in resting awareness.

Since whatever appears is actually just a form of awareness, resting as whatever appears *is* resting as awareness. When we rest as

faults, we discover they are actually self-appearances of awareness, and are therefore timelessly free and primordially pure. In this way they gradually cease to appear as faults and cease to create problems for us. When it comes right down to it, resting *as* faults or afflictive states is the path of true wisdom. The only way we can make the transition from the conventional way of using our body, speech, and mind to the speech, mind, qualities, and activities of wisdom is by resting as awareness. The qualities of wisdom do not show themselves anywhere other than in resting as awareness. They can't be learned, and they can't be perfected through avoiding, indulging, or replacing faults.

It's absolutely crucial that we hold ourselves to account for maintaining awareness, no matter what is happening. Even though the habit of indulging, avoiding, or replacing seems so ingrained, that habit is also a mirage-like appearance in awareness. There is no fault that can be perfected through indulgence, avoidance, or replacement, and no fault that cannot be exhausted through resting as awareness. This is an essential key; there are no exceptions.

Q: I sometimes feel a desire to overindulge in things like food, specifically sweets, and I feel that I need to use some discipline to overcome this. How does discipline fit in with what you are saying here?

Candice: Well, a couple of things about that. Let's say the desire for sweets comes up. You can indulge the desire and rush in and eat all the sweets you want, or you can avoid the sweets somehow by going to a place where they're not available, or you can replace the thought of getting the sweets for yourself with going to get someone else a sweet. Now, that's all fine; you can live that way all of your life, and in

that way you can neutralize those troublesome points of view. But neutralizing the point of view does not fully resolve it in a satisfactory way. The question is, do you want to live your life neutralizing your conduct, or do you want to live your life as flawless wisdom?

If we choose to live a life of neutralizing our conduct, then we'll be paying attention to all the appearances, and we'll try to either accept or reject them in some way. Let's give another example: one day you want to eat your sweets and you start thinking it over. "Oh, that pie looks so good! I don't just want one piece; I want the whole pie! But I don't want anybody to see me eat the whole thing, so I'll eat one piece here and then take the rest home and tell them that it's for someone else!"

So, then you eat the whole pie and it makes you feel sick; you have a sugar hangover, and you think about all the weight you've gained. Then you feel bad about yourself; you feel remorse for eating the whole pie, and out of that remorse you resolve to not do it again. You decide to be disciplined, but you doubt whether you'll be able to—and on and on and on. You'll just go on connecting the dots, one thought to another, one emotion to another, and your whole life could be based on that. That's one way of going about it.

However, the other way is to maintain awareness, which is the sole source of all appearances, when these points of view come up. As you continue with resting, you gradually become more and more familiar with your own awareness, and in the process you find that appearances have less power to distract you from awareness. Whatever the appearance may be, whether it's the desire for sweets or the desire to be disciplined, both are seen equally to be forms of awareness, arising and passing away within awareness. You're no longer only paying attention to the thought, but more and more your

attention is focused on the ever-present awareness that is the basis of that thought. You recognize fully evident, flawless awareness as the source of the thought, and in that you have great freedom and liberty, whereas with the other way, you only had the thoughts!

If you rest in ever-steady awareness, you'll gradually gain more familiarity with it. Remember, it's very important that you rest in a totally uncontrived way. "Uncontrived" means that you don't put in any sort of artificial structure, like resting in awareness only for a certain time each day or in a certain posture. Instead of the rest being for only a certain time of the day, like a fixed meditation session, the rest should be throughout the day, for short moments, repeated many times. Whenever anything afflictive comes up, you maintain awareness. Instead of relying on a stream of thoughts and emotions, you rely on awareness as the source of your decision-making. In that, you gain familiarity with awareness in a very natural way—one in which there is no falling back.

It's as simple as this: in resting as awareness, all the same things can go on, but you're not distracted by them any longer; you see whatever appears as awareness and remain at rest. More and more it is seen that everything that appears *is* awareness. Only in that rest can we conclusively establish in our own being that everything is a single, nondual expanse. As long as we believe that some things are different from awareness, then we are saying that it is not a single, nondual expanse.

This is not merely an intellectual process; it's not just saying, "I am awareness" all the time and then indulging whatever comes up. Nowadays, many people say, "Oh, I am awareness; everything is awareness, so I can do whatever I want." That is a grave misunderstanding and the root of many errors. Statements like that

are completely distinct from actually abiding as awareness. The real challenge is to live in complete perceptual openness in all experience to the degree of arriving at perfect mental stability, clarity, wisdom, skillful activities, and profound insight. That's very different from just repeating an affirmation.

Q: I have been completely incapacitated by a lifelong depression that has kept me from fully engaging in life, and I really feel guilty and sad about all that I've missed. Could you please help me with this?

Candice: It may not seem this way, but your true identity has never been enslaved by depression. Whenever this point of view of depression comes up, you may feel like you need to do something about it. Either you try to avoid it somehow, or you replace it with something to get you out of the depression. Instead of using any antidotes when the depression comes up, I would advise you to just rest without doing anything, without seeking anything, and without describing anything about the state that appears.

There are many fields of knowledge that describe all kinds of things, and when it comes to depression, it can be described in many ways as well. Today we have many books on psychology, and using these models we can try to figure out why we are depressed. We may assert that our depression is situational and related to certain events in our life, or we may say our depression is physiological in origin. These are examples of the conventional ways we have for explaining things, but these ideas never say anything definitive about the nature of who we really are. When we relax into the wide-open spaciousness that is the essence of our being, then we see something about ourselves that we've never known before.

When a strong point of view like depression comes up, the wisest thing we can do is to choose to rest as awareness, and to not indulge, avoid, or replace the point of view. We simply come to a complete stop, and maintain awareness without elaborating on the perception of depression. When we do so, we may gradually be able to experience that perception as appearing within a vast expanse of freedom and peace, and have a whole new openness towards it. It's through complete perceptual openness to the thoughts, emotions, and experiences that awareness is realized. Once this realization dawns, we begin to experience a warmth and directness within ourselves, and we have a much greater sense of ease, joy, and wisdom, as well as compassion for ourselves and others.

The commitment must be to resting as awareness instead of elaborating on the story. Many of the things you've described may continue to come up for a while, but just continue to rest. If you find that you are acting out of old points of view, please don't be hard on yourself. Instead, say, "Oh, I fell down, but now I'm going to get back up. I forgot about resting as awareness, and I tried some of my old points of view, but so what. I am now going to return to my commitment to resting as awareness." There's always the opportunity right here and now to rest as awareness. No matter what course the depression takes, when we rest as awareness, rather than being overwhelmed by the depression, we're able to make clear decisions about it. It also may be that by resting as awareness, we find that we have become free of depression!

The Wisdom Army

Chapter Seventeen

"Not only are we gaining confidence in awareness, but there are others around the world doing the same. In this way, we are developing a very strong instinctive wisdom that is demonstrating itself in the dignity, confidence, and skillful activities of people everywhere. This is like a "wisdom army" of awareness, an army that has very powerful weapons, such as the balanced view of equalness, abundant equanimity, perfect mental stability, and genuine passion for the service of humanity and the planet."

When we think about who we are, we usually think in terms of a combination of our body and mind as comprising our identity. We think that we are this biological mechanism contained within a skin line that has a conscious mind. When people speak of their mind, they are usually referring to the conscious entity that has all the thoughts and emotions related to the experiences of their individual biological mechanism. Then there is speech, which is considered an expression of who we are. The speech of that individual biological mechanism is understood to be the means whereby the things that are needed to feel comfortable and fulfilled are acquired.

Most people believe themselves to be nothing more than a person—a mortal body and individual mind—separate and distinct from all others. The thoughts and activities that stem from that identification with the body and mind are, for the most part, very self-centered: how I am going to get my needs filled, how I am going to get food to eat (meaning food that I *like!*), how I am going to get work I like, how I am going to get the relationships that I want, and how I am going to get money for me and those close to me. Virtually all of the thoughts that stem from that core identification with the body and

mind will be about this supposed self that imagines it needs all of these things. We grow to believe that we are indeed dependent on those things for our well-being.

Conventional speech, and the mental constructs that are its basis, is always focused on the division of subject and object. It alternates between happiness and sadness, fame and defamation, exaltation and punishment. All that appears is seen in terms of opposites—right and wrong, good and bad, positive and negative, hope and fear, benefit and harm, indulgence and renunciation, acceptance and rejection. The conventional activities of the body, speech, and mind all reference back to an intangible individual identity, which is attempting to improve its self-esteem and self-respect, both by seeing faults in others and by eliminating faults and developing positive qualities in itself.

If we believe ourselves to be a person—an independent agent and the only source of all of our thoughts—then we're going to be lost in those thoughts all of our lives. Within ordinary thinking, rooted in the "I am a person" idea, there will be no insight into the indestructible reality and timeless freedom of our fundamental condition.

However, we have a choice: we can either continue to live a very ordinary life locked inside a box of conventional perceptions, or we can get to know ourselves as an expression of nature's intelligence. We can either continue to have conventional beliefs about the body, speech, and mind with all the limitations brought on by that choice, or we can discover our fundamental condition, which is nature's intelligence itself. We can then manifest the powerful speech and mind that are inherent in that intelligence.

Nature's intelligence is an inconceivably sublime reality that is pure like infinite space. Within it, everything is perfect all at once. This is

the true body of everyone, and that is what we must gain familiarity with. This wisdom body is unimaginably beautiful. It can never be defined, because it has no limitations, parts, or segments. It has never been divided into any kind of thing, whether small or large, gross or subtle. Suffice it to say that it is the one timeless and changeless reality in which all phenomena appear and disappear. It is our fundamental condition, and whatever appears is made only of that.

Every thought, emotion, or experience has never been anything other than an expression of nature's pure intelligence. When we discover awareness as our direct connection with this wisdom, it gradually reveals itself to be the true nature of all phenomena. When pure perception dawns, the absolute simplicity and spaciousness of mind becomes more and more obvious. It intensifies in and of itself through our simple acknowledgement of the carefree ease within our own being. This is our own natural awareness, which has nothing to guard or defend against, for it is timeless and indestructible. The mind of super-complete wisdom is at ease, wise, stable, insightful, and compassionate beyond words and concepts. It includes thinking but does not rely on thinking. It relies only on the spontaneity of its own intelligence, and effortlessly sees and knows its own intelligence in all.

Wisdom speech is courageous eloquence that doesn't need any conventional thinking to inform it. In other words, it tells it like it is with no need to argue or debate! It has nothing to prove and nothing to compete with. It can never be judged, because its quality is so profound. True wisdom speech is inconceivably beautiful. The mind is restored to peace and wisdom just through hearing it. It places us in the irreversible state where we never again return to the impermanence and suffering of belief in points of view. This is the power of the indestructible melodious sound of wisdom speech.

There has never been any possibility of wisdom speech being destroyed. It can never be snuffed out, altered, owned, or changed in any way. It is the original, continual emanation of the supreme reality and a direct doorway into that reality. As all forms are forms of formless awareness, so are all sounds the self-sounds of the basic space of awareness.

The activities of the wisdom body, speech, and mind all stem from resting as the expanse of equalness and evenness that pervades all appearances. This wisdom expanse is the one naturally occurring reality, the primordial unity that has never known any split or division. It sees everything as perfect all at once and all phenomena as indivisible and mutually interpenetrating. The speech, qualities, and activities that emanate from someone established in that infinite expanse of wisdom are the ultimate expression of great benefit for all beings. No matter how much we may have already contributed to the world around us, in gaining familiarity with our wisdom nature, we unleash a power of benefit that is truly extraordinary, which will allow us to exceed anything we have ever accomplished before.

The golden key to discovering this inherent wisdom is to establish ourselves in fully relaxed perceptual openness throughout the day and in all experiences, no matter what may be happening. This means experiencing everything totally, allowing that wide-open spacious awareness to be the one context in which everything occurs. This releases a tremendous energy that is usually constricted by the preoccupation with points of view, of trying to label, sort, and control everything that appears. If we've been constantly depending on the fixed reference points of our personal identity, then in a sense we have been retreating from a direct experience of life. The more we let go of those limited ideas which have made up our personal identity, the

more our wide-open awareness can release the tremendous energy inherent in our true nature. This energy automatically cuts through barriers created by habitual emotional patterns, empowering confidence in awareness.

No matter what our habitual emotional patterns have been, they will be completely dissolved in naturally restful awareness. Resting as awareness in the face of all experience is a treasure trove of benefit for our individual lives, our families, and all the communities and nations of our world. To talk about it in a simple human way, when we maintain awareness, life gets better and better! Instead of being all wrapped up in ourselves, we become more and more devoted to benefiting other people and our planet, and we become empowered to do so with extraordinary potency.

This primordial wisdom is not achieved by effort involving cause and effect. The qualities of wisdom body, speech, and mind do not show themselves anywhere other than in resting as awareness. They cannot be learned by studying, and they cannot be perfected through avoiding faults, indulging faults, or replacing faults with positive actions and qualities. They don't come about through doing good works, developing meritorious activities or positive states of mind, or avoiding negative states of mind. The wisdom body of timeless awareness is naturally present, and it is not realized as a result of any circumstances. It is here now, in its fullness.

As amazing as it may seem after years of trying to better ourselves or trying to keep a tight control on our thoughts, emotions, and experiences, when we begin to rest as awareness, we come to see that the natural space of awareness is already perfect and therefore doesn't need any adjustments to make it perfect.

All human beings have the capacity for wisdom. Another term that has been used to describe this inherent wisdom is “nature’s intelligence” or “basic human goodness.” Nature’s intelligence is the wisdom body of great benefit, and it is that wisdom body itself that emanates the speech, mind, qualities, and activities of each of us. These are not traits that are endowed to some special beings who then pass them on to others. The wisdom body I’m speaking about is the natural wisdom body of all seven billion people on this planet and of everything altogether. When we rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times, we become effortlessly familiar with this wisdom identity, which is our ever-present fundamental condition, our own natural being.

In the ease of our own awareness, wisdom powers of great benefit are already naturally occurring. Just because we’ve never learned this about ourselves doesn’t mean that it isn’t the case. It *is* the case, and it has always been so throughout time for every human being. This is not something that can be cultivated, developed, or learned; it naturally manifests as we gain confidence in awareness. We tap into this wisdom body of great benefit by resting as indestructible awareness.

Through the simple act of resting as awareness for short moments until the rest becomes ceaseless, we come to see that our essential nature is truly indestructible. Indeed, we are immortal—not immortal as an individual body, but immortal as the wisdom body of nature’s intelligence, which is timeless and already free.

Points of view are inherently fleeting, whether they are the points of view of birth, life, death, or the process of dying, but awareness, in which all points of view appear, is permanent and changeless. Only through stable awareness being the priority in all

situations does one gain complete familiarity with the powers of awareness. It's as simple as that. It can't come about in any other way. It's absolutely impossible that one can have the decisive experience of awareness by thinking about it, or by trying to improve one's points of view, or trying to get into some sort of altered state.

Q: I have to admit to a fair amount of unease when I hear you, because you don't seem to be part of any tradition that I am familiar with. You're speaking only from your own experience without direct reference to any of the wisdom teachings or teachers from the past. How can you justify putting this teaching out to people when it seems to be something that you just came up with on your own?

Candice: First of all, it's very difficult to understand through ordinary thinking how teachings like this occur. Ordinary thinking tries to make sense of an appearance by making it the result of a cause, but that can never explain the way teachings like this appear.

Throughout all of time teachers have communicated profound wisdom that has enriched the lives of hundreds of millions of people. It is very likely that many of these teachers were asked the same question you are asking me. The teaching may emerge from an individual living in a specific time period; yet, all phenomena have their source in nature's intelligence and its self-cognizing capacity—awareness. Even though various teachings have appeared in different forms throughout time, they always appear in, of, as, and through awareness. They're not simply the accomplishment of an individual person. They speak to the needs of people living in different eras who will benefit from them. The true measure of any teaching is whether or not it benefits many people. If a teaching benefits many,

many people and inspires them to be happy, caring people who contribute to human society, it is said to be of great benefit.

Even though we may not have ever heard anything like this before, when we come to these teachings with a spirit of openness, it's like *zam, boom, bam!* That's all there is to it! Such unconventional wisdom speech can directly convey the decisive experience of awareness to open listeners, but there is no way that this can be described adequately through conventional logic. Teaching people how to gain confidence in awareness is by far the most important of the powers of awareness.

Many teachings have come forth in different forms throughout the ages. The Great Freedom Teaching is one of those forms. It's a teaching that allows people in the current era to live authentically by drawing on the power of fundamental human goodness that is implicit in awareness. There is only one simple method to become familiar with awareness that all human beings can readily understand and implement: to rest as awareness, for short moments, repeated many times, without altering or indulging the thoughts, emotions, sensations, or experiences that appear.

The introduction to awareness is crucial; it can come about in a number of ways. One way is that suddenly one's mind will spontaneously open up to the vast perspective of awareness. A second way is to be directly introduced to awareness by a teacher. A genuine teacher will have the power to convey the experience of pure awareness to others directly, using one means or another. When the teacher's skillful means and incisive insight are fully present, awareness can be unerringly shown in a way that is appropriate to many people living in a given era.

A third way is to hear teachings about awareness and to be liberated simply upon hearing them. A fourth way is to combine resting as awareness with the conviction that gradually dawns by listening to the teachings that are available face-to-face, online, and in other media. The fifth way is for the person's mind to already be naturally restful, so when the person hears the teaching, it makes perfect sense and conviction comes about spontaneously.

The ideal disposition of a person who wants to rest as awareness is simply to be open enough to listen to the teachings for a while. It's no big deal really. The teaching may not make sense to everyone immediately, and for many it will remain puzzling until it becomes part of their direct experience. For most people, conviction dawns gradually.

This means you must be willing to consider the possibility that the conventional identity you have always taken yourself to be may not be altogether accurate, and that something far greater about you awaits discovery. Just by being open and continuing to rest as awareness, you come to see that there is a profound identity that is an alternative to conventional ways of identifying yourself.

Regarding the teachings of the past, it's important to understand something about the historical and cultural circumstances surrounding them. Those teachings all started out as something new! At one time human culture was quite fragmented and isolated into tribal or national cultures, because people couldn't readily travel long distances or communicate with each other easily across countries or continents. People were separated geographically, and it was difficult for them to come into contact with people outside their native areas. The teachers of that day could only directly teach people who were close to them, geographically and culturally, so the teachers would be speaking within

a certain cultural context that was understandable to the people who were coming to them. Very beautiful traditions grew up within those cultures to serve the needs of the people, and many excellent methods and practices were developed that were culturally specific to that time and place.

Today, however, our planet is going through an amazing change, and all of a sudden we're all connected in a way that was impossible in the past. For the first time in history there is a global human culture with rapidly dissolving boundaries. Not only national boundaries are dissolving, but also the boundaries of the human body as the only means of relationship are dissolving. We can talk to each other very conveniently wherever we may be in the world, with no contact other than an Internet connection. Often, today, all we can verify about the identity of the people we are communicating with is that somebody, somewhere, is reading our words and sending a reply. When we correspond with someone via the Internet, we may have no idea who they are on a personal level, and that's okay. We don't need to be face-to-face to communicate any longer.

We have incredible means of acquiring and distributing information through the Internet and telecommunications. We can easily travel all over the world, and we have tremendous access to all kinds of information about philosophies and teachers that were not available even fifteen years ago. The teachings of the present day cannot be limited to the specific context of geographically isolated peoples any longer, as most of us no longer live that way. We are all, to one degree or another, participating as a global human family that has a shared responsibility for each member of that family, and for the planet we live on as well.

Thus, the Great Freedom Teaching is available to a much broader range of humanity than teachings in the past, because the communication obstacles I just described are no longer present. We've become a global human culture, and the primary need of this age is the unification of humankind. More and more, we want to be able to communicate easily with everyone, and we now have the communication tools to do that.

Whether ancient or modern, there are certain direct teachings that can be called pinnacle teachings, which are simply about the ultimate nature of being human. These are complete teachings with unerring instruction on how to completely realize basic human goodness and share the power of its balanced perspective for the benefit of all. There's no need to call them "spiritual teachings." We don't need to spiritualize, religionize, philosophize, or psychologize this kind of teaching. They are first and foremost about being human—that's all. They're not owned by any person or any tradition.

Because the Great Freedom Teaching is available to people throughout the world, via the Internet and other means, we use language that is accessible to most people, and that helps develop a common understanding regarding the shared experience of what it means to gain confidence in awareness. Through our example of a powerful worldwide community, which includes teachings and trained teachers focused solely on communicating the practice of resting as awareness, we offer a way of life that is immediately beneficial to everyone.

If wisdom teachings are presented in a manner appropriate to the current circumstances and understanding of people in a given age, rather than cloaked in unfamiliar cultural traditions and practices, then many more people can benefit from them. There are many people

worldwide who benefit from the Great Freedom grassroots movement who might not otherwise have been served if the teachings were limited to a specific social, cultural, or religious context.

Many people around the world are now opening up to basic human goodness and its expressions of tremendous benefit. This benefit comes about through powerful activities based on truly caring about each other in an uncontrived way. The shift to resting as awareness as an alternative way of life is not only an imperative for the individual; it is an evolutionary imperative as well. If our species is to survive, a broad-based group of people must arise from the grassroots and they must be endowed with the instinctive wisdom of nature's intelligence that is implicit in stable awareness. That is the only way we can successfully solve the problems currently threatening our species and planet.

It's very interesting that at this critical juncture in the history of humankind the people who are most likely to realize the wisdom and skillful powers of awareness aren't necessarily the people trying to do so through timeworn traditional norms. The people most likely to recognize awareness are those who have a disposition of openness and caring, whatever their outer circumstances may appear to be, and the teachings that will bring about their recognition will increasingly be unlike the methods and practices of the past. No belief system has authority or ownership of awareness.

Often organizations fail to thrive, because they don't completely meet the needs of the people who come to them. Most people today don't want to engage in practices that don't have a measurable outcome that's immediately beneficial to their life. This is the correct attitude for one wishing to discover awareness; it shows the power of discernment. These days, open-minded, discerning people are unlikely

to participate in a method or practice that doesn't ensure results for themselves or others. They are far less likely to buy into a system where most people don't achieve what has been promised by the prescribed practices.

People today are also far less likely to allow themselves to be blamed for the failure of these practices to deliver what has been promised. More and more, people simply will not tolerate hierarchies in which the leadership is idolized as being somehow greater than everyone else. We no longer live in the age of hero worship, where we turn our lives over to an authority who is supposed to take care of us and parcel out what they think we need.

We live in the age of collaboration. Like bees in a hive, we collaborate to make honey! Each worker is essential to the collaboration, including the queen. Everyone is important. The model of "servant leadership" is the model of the hive. The leadership serves for the benefit of all, and that is its only goal—not authority, status, fame, or money. Such things may come along with servant leadership, but they are not at all the goal of the servant leader, who is motivated solely by the desire for benefit of all. Hierarchical organizations will fade from view as humankind continues to evolve in its ability to collaborate for the benefit of everyone.

No matter how strong our emotions may be in relation to the belief systems and practices we've learned, if we can rest as stable awareness, we will discover what we've been seeking in those other practices. We will gradually move into a space of wisdom beyond words and concepts—and there discover the living essence that is at the root of all faiths and of nature itself. This we will find in our own direct experience of reality.

As we gain confidence in awareness ourselves, it will be increasingly clear that there are others around the world who are doing the same. Through individuals like you and me, and through organizations like Great Freedom, humanity is developing a very strong instinctive wisdom that is demonstrating itself in the dignity, confidence, and skillful activities of people everywhere. This is like a “wisdom army” of awareness, an army that has very powerful weapons, such as the balanced view of equalness, abundant equanimity, perfect mental stability, and genuine passion for the service of humanity and the planet. This is true caring and true wisdom.

By the power of resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times, these wisdom qualities and activities of great benefit come about naturally and effortlessly.

No Effort, No Special Circumstances

Chapter Eighteen

"This natural wisdom is truly magnificent and unparalleled. When most of us hear about something this grand, we think that it is going to require many years of education to become acquainted with it. However, this wisdom is not something that needs to be learned. It is the birthright of everyone and is already within everyone."

I have only one message, and that is: stop seeking! There is no search to be undertaken, and everything there is to be known or realized is *already* known and realized. What's already been given doesn't need to be sought. The super-complete, superbly helpful nature of everything lives as our own awareness. There's no destination to get to, and there's no one going there. All there is, is stainless, flawless, ever-present awareness.

If we can simply listen to the instructions that have been given—relax body and mind completely and rest naturally as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, until it becomes automatic—it will become more and more obvious that everything is perfect all at once. There are no adjustments whatsoever to be made. The idea that adjustments need to be made is a fiction. What is super-complete and present everywhere has to be easy. What could possibly be required to obtain what you already have?

The relationship between super-complete awareness and the points of view that appear within it can be compared to the air through which a breeze blows. Both the breeze and the air are really just air. It's impossible to say where the breeze began, where its middle is, and where it ends, as the breeze is inseparable from the air. In the same way, no matter what appears within awareness, whether it's a

thought, emotion, perception, or experience, it's never been anything other than awareness.

The only way to realize this wisdom is to stop trying to control thoughts; in other words, we just relax and allow the thinking to do whatever it will. As we let go of our habit of trying to change the contents of the mind and simply rest in the basic space of awareness in which all thoughts arise and pass away, that basis becomes more and more obvious. Just as the morning sun appears in the sky and outshines all the planets and stars, so too when we relax and allow all the thoughts and emotions to do whatever they will, the clear light of the wisdom mind begins to outshine all the thoughts and emotions that arise.

Wisdom is completely beyond thinking and doesn't need any opinions whatsoever to prove itself. We don't even have to do anything to realize this wisdom, because it is so natural to us. If we simply hear about it over and over again, it will become more and more obvious that wisdom really is the true nature of the mind. We come to see that the original purity of the mind has never been obscured by the thoughts and emotions that have come and gone. We also see that we've never really needed those thoughts to describe or define who we are, and that all our attempts to define ourselves through thought are fleeting at best. Our true nature is beyond anything that thoughts can conjure up.

This natural wisdom is truly magnificent and unparalleled. When most of us hear about something this grand, we think that it's going to require many years of education to become acquainted with it. However, this wisdom is not something that needs to be learned. It's the birthright of everyone and is already within everyone. The only way to know it is to acknowledge it—to completely relax and allow the

clear light of awareness to shine through everything. When we do that, it becomes very obvious that no education is necessary. All that is required is an open mind, and since everyone already has an open mind, everyone is qualified to realize it!

Whatever our IQ is, wherever we live, or however many possessions we have, none of that matters. There is no hierarchy of any kind in awareness. Wisdom has never been owned by institutions, religions, or authoritative historical figures. No one can claim ownership of wisdom, nor can anyone dole it out; it is not the possession of an elite part of the population. In wisdom there is no higher or lower, no this way or that way. It is all-pervading, all-encompassing, indivisible, and fully present everywhere in each moment. When the certainty of it in our own being dawns, all the thoughts that were once so persistent no longer have a hold on us. The recognition of this turns everything upside down about who we are, what life is, and what it means to be a human being. When we learn to tune into pure awareness, and simply listen again and again to the melody of what is really true about ourselves, the result is that awareness becomes more and more obvious—with nothing to learn, nothing to effort for, and nothing to achieve.

If we feel plagued by any kind of persistent thinking, when it comes up we only need to relax and rest as awareness, rather than getting distracted by the thinking itself. All thoughts are temporary appearances that have no substance; they're nothing but the clear light of the wisdom mind. Whatever the phenomena or points of view are, they're all primordially pure. Birth, life, death, war, famine, young, old, up or down—they're all primordially pure. One thing that's guaranteed about all appearances is that they will vanish of their own accord like the flight path of a bird in the sky. Absolutely nothing

needs to be done about them. The true nature of the mind is sky-like and always remains so; it has never gotten wrapped up in any thought or been affected by any thought.

Trying to change something about ourselves in order to have a greater likelihood of enjoying our true nature leads nowhere and just adds more confusion. It's just more of someone trying to get somewhere. Whether it's the appearance of an ego, an 'I', a personality, or anything that's being enacted by that 'I', it's all mirage-like. A mirage can't cause a problem unless we take it to be real. None of us would try to fix or improve a mirage or try to get something out of it. It would be a useless and frustrating endeavor leading nowhere. In the same way, trying to work on a non-existent ego or personality just leads to exhaustion, because it's futile to work on nothing! Rather than wasting our time trying to fix a mirage, why not rest and enjoy the natural glow of everything just as it is?

There is nothing to realize. Realization is simply resting as the stainless knower of all phenomena, and that's already right here. If we say, "I have to realize something," then we've taken up a position somewhere and adopted a point of view. But if we give up all the positions of a realizer realizing something definitive, then we don't have to worry about any position-taking. We're just relaxed all the time. "I am seeking" is a point of view, and "realization" is also just a point of view. Beyond them both and untouched by either is awareness—timelessly free and fully present within us in every moment.

If we give unnecessary power to the appearances within our mind, then we are complicating our lives, and we'll feel uncomfortable a lot of the time. When we give power to the appearances, we'll always be looking for the right thought, the right emotional state, or

the right experience to relieve the discomfort inherent in a personal identity. However, the wholesome goodness of our original being isn't dependent on or affected by the contents of our mind. It has never been touched by our judgments and has never been ensnared in a personal identity. True wisdom is found in knowing that everything is equal.

Spiritual seeking cannot bring us to freedom, because we're *already* free! We can't say that seeking will bring us to liberation, because we have never been bound. Our freedom is here and now! We don't have to live anywhere special to enjoy our true nature, neither do we have to live in any special setting, or be remote from other people, or renounce the world. We can do that if we want to, but in itself it doesn't really lead anywhere or produce any cause for realizing our true nature. Our lifestyle has nothing whatsoever to do with the recognition of primordial purity. *All* lifestyles are primordially pure. We can be a monk in Tibet, a housewife in Texas, a programmer at Microsoft, a ditch digger, a cake baker, or whatever it is, and it's the perfect circumstance for the realization of our true nature.

To live a life permeated with self-criticism will lead to criticism of others. That's just the way it is. To gain familiarity with the awareness that is at the basis of everything gently relieves us of that self-criticism. We come into the wholly positive goodness of our own being, and as we do so, we begin to feel that same gentleness and kindness with other people too. Resting as awareness shows us that other people are just like us. This is true interconnectedness.

Q: I don't disagree with anything you are saying, but I would personally be troubled if everybody sort of looked inward and stopped

doing things. How can society progress if people are only focused on their awareness?

Candice: Thank you for bringing up that point; it's an important question. Becoming aware doesn't mean getting into a state and then being cut off from the world. That is a misperception about what becoming aware means. Becoming aware doesn't mean inaction; on the contrary, when we rest as awareness our compassion is empowered to flow into action in a whole new way. True awareness is a force of immense benefit for all.

Q: Okay, but doesn't resting tend to make a person passive?

Candice: No! I mean, I am working around the clock; that's certainly not passive! Is a teaching that provides 24/7 support all over the world a passive event?

Before I had this shift twenty-six years ago, I was focused on achievement, and I had accomplished many things. However, I never felt like I could do enough, no matter how much I accomplished, and I would often feel distraught. "Oh, I accomplished all this, but what next?" I had worked very hard to do the right things in my life in order to be a good adult, but when I got into a great crisis in my life, none of that helped at all. I was completely at a loss, not knowing how to go on. I tried everything, both positive and negative, to feel better. There was just no relief to be found in any of the belief systems I had previously relied on, and that is when this recognition of resting as awareness appeared in my mind stream.

The distinction between my endeavors before the shift and after it is that my present activity is effortless and tireless and completely focused on the benefit of all. The purpose of our life, of anyone's life, is to be of tremendous benefit to ourselves and others. When we rest as

the awareness that is the essence of all our perceptions, then we get familiar with wisdom that can't be learned. True awareness is potentially beneficial and is not passive in any way.

Q: If people relax but they are not ready to be aware, what they probably do is to fall into laziness, and that is not really a good state of awareness. So how can people not fall into laziness?

Candice: Laziness, like agitation or any other description, is just a point of view. The most important thing is to relax as flawless awareness, and see all as flawless awareness, until it is clear that all is flawless awareness. In this is tremendous energy, for awareness is synonymous with tremendous energy. When the cage of labels has disappeared and the confines of all these points of view are seen through, then there is only awareness itself. If initially laziness is one of the points of view that you drift around in, just maintain awareness with full force. There's no need to judge anything that appears or change anything that appears. Everything you need to know about laziness or anything else is best known from awareness.

Let's say that laziness comes up, and then there is the story about the laziness: "If I'm lazy like this, I'll never get anything done. I should be doing this, and I should be doing that." Then the next thing is that you're thinking about the past: "I've always been lazy. When I was growing up my mom and dad said, 'You're lazy!' Maybe it's their fault that I'm lazy!" This is simply a proliferation of points of view coupled with a distraction by these points of view. However, when laziness appears, and in response there is just the ease of awareness—rather than the need to be lost in the story—then awareness will be obviously present, despite the perception of "laziness." When we begin resting, we start to see with greater clarity

how points of view proliferate and resolve, and then the tendency to be distracted by them starts to dissolve. Points of view and awareness are inseparable, but if we go off into the story and let the thoughts overtake us endlessly, then it will be impossible to see that.

Q: What does "realization" mean to you?

Candice: Realization is just a point of view within the all-encompassing pure view of awareness. There's no one who's ever been anything, including "realized." On the other hand, by the power of understanding the nature of phenomena, there is the demonstrable power of beneficial qualities and activities that is evident in one's voice, mind, and body. Nowadays, realization is often mistaken to be a liberated mind. However, the liberation of the mind is not the ultimate fruit.

All is pure presence, which is primordially aware. Without any conventional frameworks, such as the idea of a "liberated mind," there will be true spontaneity. We go beyond imitations of any kind. Making no distinction between self and others, there is a display of the powers of great benefit to all. Detached from whatever is said, speech is like a melodious echo. All is free from the beginning, in the same way that bright light is free in the sky. Effortless compassion, love, and tremendous energy radiate impartially like sunlight blazing from the sun. Know that such a way of being represents the birthright and natural state of all beings.

Q: So we're all realized now?

Candice: Yes. It's nothing more than enjoying the natural settledness of everything as it is. It's so amazing, because the more we relax, the more the naturally manifest joy that is the essence of everything becomes apparent. There's a kindness and a lightness of being that's

absolutely evident. It's very likely you'll smile more and not be so hard on yourself or others.

The mystification of the reality of our being is something that's come about through the development of elaborate philosophical systems to describe what is actually totally simple. There's no great esoteric nature to anything; it is all just the pure presence of awareness. When understanding the nature of being becomes so marginalized through overcomplication or oversimplification that almost no one can understand it, then it's time to strip everything naked and get back to basics.

The beauty of everything as it is, is that it is so simple and benevolent. The entirely beneficial and wholly positive fundamental nature of being is the one and only reality, and it includes everything. That's very simple. There's no way to talk about anything or describe anything as finite and definitive in and of itself, because nothing is separate from this all-encompassing reality. Who we are is entirely indescribable, so the dissociated ways of talking about things that we sometimes hear are completely unnecessary. To say things like, "There is no experiencer, there is no doer, I am unborn, all is unborn"—this kind of speaking is what I call "the nondual shuffle." When you just rest, these kinds of intellectual supports are completely unnecessary.

If you begin resting and you feel that you are "experiencing rest" or "practicing rest," that's perfectly okay in the beginning. The whole idea of someone practicing or experiencing rest will naturally slip away without any need to think about it. There's no need to take up a position anywhere, no need to say this way is right and that way is wrong. Just relax into the essence of your own being, and all is revealed exactly as it is. There's no need to describe anything as fixed

or definite, no need to put labels on your experience. Just relax. In the natural equalness of everything as it is, there's perfect wisdom.

Even the term "equalness" is just another label. The reality of what we are can be described as "equalness," "the nondual expanse," and so forth, but none of these terms are needed. No linguistic support is required; in fact, no support whatsoever is needed for that which is the basis of everything. When we look at everything as it is with simple human perception, we can see that there is a natural order to everything. Even in chaos and confusion, there is the pure presence of a natural order that is completely at ease. There's never been anything separate from that. There is no need to define it as a finite something or as an infinite nothing. No description about reality is either right or wrong. Reality is always beyond descriptions—yet the experience of it is always present within us as the ease of our own being. Short moments repeated many times become spontaneous!

Direct Teachings

Chapter Nineteen

"Direct teachings state in no uncertain terms that there is no destination and no one going there, because the innate reality of our being is unachieved and unachievable."

If we aspire to realize our true identity, it's important to take advantage of teachings that can bring about that realization in a very practical way. The easiest and most direct of all teachings instructs us to rest naturally in the ease of our own being, and to return to that rest repeatedly. This is one of the most ancient of all practices, and throughout the centuries many people have realized their true nature through this practice because it is so easy and direct.

When I say that the fundamental nature is already present, absolutely accessible, and available to everyone, I mean *everyone*. Anyone can rest as awareness! Realizing our fundamental nature through resting as awareness doesn't depend on any special circumstances. It doesn't depend on being a particular gender or nationality, living in one place or another, being spiritually inclined, able to understand deep philosophical concepts, or even on being able to read! Maintaining awareness for brief moments until it becomes constant is all that's required, and that's an ability that comes with being human.

The words I'm using here to communicate the teaching are only a gateway to the real teaching, which happens within you. When we simply remain open to the words of an unerring teaching, it starts to work in a wondrous way; the essence of the teaching begins to be obvious in our own experience. There's something completely indescribable about how that happens. Let's say a person hears about

resting as awareness and maybe experiences an overwhelming resonance with the teaching, and then something very profound happens, but no one can say exactly how that occurred. The person can't really say, "I learned this, then I did this and that, then I spent five years doing this other thing, and then *boom*, I got it!" What already *is* cannot be made to come about—and when it is revealed, we can't say exactly how or why. All we can say is that by basking in the truth of who we are in a very simple way, certainty dawned in us; the how and why of it are beyond words.

If we're only looking at things in terms of cause and effect, we'll think that achieving something as incredible as enlightenment or liberation—which simply mean the optimal way of being human— must involve incredible effort, in fact, much more effort than the other things for which we've had to exert ourselves all our lives. Maybe we'll think, "With the kind of mind *I* have, I'll have to use superhuman effort all day long for decades!" These are just assumptions based on the belief that the body and mind have to be mastered in order to achieve some future goal. The truth is that enlightenment is nothing but the direct discovery of our own awareness, which is already fully present.

People meditate, do yoga, and repeat mantras in order to become enlightened, but the crucial factor is not the activity itself, but maintaining awareness—the fundamental condition—while performing the activity. Repeating mantras or meditating is really not different from writing computer software—they both provide an equal opportunity to rest as awareness. I always tell people that if they have a practice that they like, such as meditation or mantra repetition, they can feel free to continue with it, but they should do so without thinking that it's leading to any goal. They can just do it as something they

enjoy. But, thinking that methods and practices lead to the achievement of a goal just serves to strengthen the illusion of the personal identity, and keeps the already present goal out of reach. This is a crucial point.

Awareness cannot be realized through striving, and pursuing points of view as though they lead somewhere will not serve us. As we rest, coming to know the truth about ourselves happens in a very simple and straightforward way. Direct teachings don't assert that we must develop virtue and practice different meritorious activities in order to be pure enough to recognize our true nature. Direct teachings state in no uncertain terms that there is no destination and no one going there, because the innate reality of our being is unachieved and unachievable.

If we want direct instruction, then that's the kind of teaching we should look for, rather than one that says: "Oh yes, your essential nature is nondual and free, but first let me tell you what you have to fix about yourself in order to be free! You've got to get rid of this and this and this and cultivate this and that and the other thing!" Indirect teachings declare that the fundamental condition is already present, but then turn around and add, "But you are flawed and need to be fixed." That's talking out of both sides of the mouth—and it's entirely misguided, because there is essentially no one to be fixed and no one to do the fixing! This becomes effortlessly clear in resting as awareness, and there is no need to engage in the extremes of stiff language to describe or support ideas about the lack of a personal identity or a doer.

What we really need is unerring instruction. There are two types of speech: the first speaks *about* something; that could be called ordinary speech. The second type directly transmits what's being

spoken about, and that is called wisdom speech. Ordinary speech is all wrapped up in conventional points of view, while wisdom speech emanates from the pure expanse of the basic space of awareness. When utilizing ordinary speaking or writing, one usually tries to understand the words intellectually, relate the words to all the points of view one has, and give the words meaning and significance based upon what has been read or heard before. This is how we've been taught to learn from a very young age.

Wisdom speech is entirely different. It doesn't require any learning, because it is innate. Wisdom speech, whether it's spoken or written, introduces awareness in a very direct way, and it has the inherent power to expand that introduction into full confidence in awareness. The power of wisdom speech places the minds of listeners in an irreversible state of well-being. When a listener simply relaxes and is open to what is spoken or written, that openness evokes wisdom from within.

Most modern languages don't really have any term for the subject-less, object-less, wide-open expanse of radiant awareness—and even in languages like Tibetan or Sanskrit which are nondual language systems, no words can fully encompass it. We can use terms that point to it, but there's nothing that can fully describe it, and the experience of it is completely beyond words. And yet, words have their value. The words you're reading now have only one purpose: to evoke the direct experience of timeless awareness in you. So don't try to comprehend these things merely with the critical intellect or understand them based on what you've learned or believed before. Just relax and rest, and discover directly that timeless awareness is already fully present.

Instructions relating to the realization of awareness have been handed down from one generation to another in many cultures around the world, but there have been relatively few direct teachings that give unerring instruction on how to realize awareness. These direct teachings have actually been available for many thousands of years; an unbroken lineage of those who have realized their true nature through resting as awareness stretches back like a range of golden mountains throughout time. And what do these teachings state? Exactly what is described here in the Great Freedom Teaching: rest as awareness, for short moments repeated many times, until it becomes spontaneous and continuous at all times.

Nonetheless, for the most part, until now the single focus on resting as awareness has been available only to a relatively small number of people; in the past it's been very difficult to find. Those giving such teachings were often quite inaccessible; maybe they were teaching in a cave on a snow-covered mountain in the Himalayas or in Tibet in a yak tent, and you'd have to walk for days under difficult conditions to find them. In this way, we can all be thankful that times have changed!

In the past, most of the teachings for realizing awareness have been rooted in specific geographical, cultural, and social circumstances and were therefore not readily accessible to someone outside of that culture. However, today we have a global culture, with technologies such as the Internet and telecommunications that can instantly connect people all over the world. We have tremendous access to all kinds of information, as well as an increasingly common language and a similar cultural context. So now this ancient teaching has arisen in a new form, one that's easily accessible to just about everyone.

In the lineage of those who have realized timeless awareness through resting naturally, it has always been up to these people in any given generation to take the teachings and communicate them in a way that's directly understandable in that time period. For the first time, this unerring instruction is being given freely and openly to all of humanity, in a language that almost everyone can understand. These teachings are for the benefit of all beings. They come out of awareness, and they don't belong to any culture or person, and are not owned by any sect or tradition.

Although studying ancient texts may have its value, to limit ourselves to antiquated texts and instructions that are difficult to comprehend isn't really helpful. It just makes a reality that is always fully present seem distant and inaccessible. In Great Freedom, if we had chosen to use words and concepts that were limited to a certain culture, then that specificity would have limited the number of people who would be able to understand the teachings on resting as awareness. For instance, if we used terms such as *dharmakaya*, *sunyata*, *Absolute*, *Atman*, or *moksha*, a majority of modern listeners would either be completely baffled, or incorrectly think they know exactly what we mean! Either way, it could be an obstacle. But if instead we use simple terms such as "awareness" and "timeless freedom," then it's likely that more people will be able to relate to those ideas, and come to a decisive experience of the essence of the Teaching.

It's very important to have an instruction that's absolutely suited for the people living in the era in which it emerges, spoken in a manner that the people of that era can understand, and offering a complete system of support for participants. Most importantly, it has to be an instruction that leads to the swift accomplishment of timeless

awareness. Unerring instruction from a skilled teacher can transmit the decisive experience of our true nature to many people all at once. But for this to occur, the teaching has to be open, direct and accessible, and not hidden away on a dusty shelf.

Resting as awareness is a teaching for people who can move beyond concepts. The ones who are completely open are the ones who can say, "I'm done with everything else! I just want a simple and direct approach. If you teach me, I'll listen." If people are truly open to what they are seeking—one hundred percent open, with all of their heart—then they will eventually find themselves in a circumstance where they will hear a direct teaching, and there will be nothing that can keep them away from it. However, if they're more committed to their former practices and ideas of moving towards a future destination, then that will remain what they're committed to.

I don't try to convince anyone who isn't ready or interested; I just wait for those who are really ready to show up. I believe in attraction rather than promotion!

Now, what is a direct teacher? A teacher is really the ultimate friend. The relationship between the teacher and the people who come to participate with that teacher is one in which there is great intimacy, total well-being, and love. A skilled teacher already has the decisive experience of fully evident awareness in her or his own life, and is devoted to bringing that awareness to others in a loving and supportive way. Direct teachers are able to teach in an authoritative and convincing way because of their unfailing rest, wisdom, insight, and skill in all circumstances.

When teachers are manifesting the full capacity of their true nature, other people will naturally want to learn from them. Those who are fully familiar with their own true nature have a tremendous ability

to attract others, just through that profound familiarity and confidence. Others see them and say, "I want what they have! They're a human being just like me, and if they can embody those qualities, then so can I!" So many people want to be at peace, accomplished, loving, and wise, and a skilled and direct teacher can facilitate the recognition of these inherent gifts.

A direct teacher has the power to introduce people to awareness, and can support people in becoming fully familiar with awareness through the use of clear language and supportive conditions. Furthermore, the teacher's power is evident in the written and oral teachings, which contain key points and pivotal instructions that directly benefit those who read or hear them. A direct teacher is also able to provide centers for study and practice that are relevant to the needs of those being served.

Of course, throughout time there have also been highly visible teachers whose teachings led nowhere, or who took advantage of their students in harmful ways. The result is that many people all over the world don't trust gurus or spiritual teachers at all. Some people have had negative experiences with teachers, and as a result they no longer feel drawn to seek out a teacher, and this is quite easy to understand. Enlightenment teachings are one area of human endeavor where a certain kind of result is often promised but rarely delivered! If some kind of assurance is made or implied, and then no result is forthcoming, then obviously that can lead to diminishing trust.

This is one aspect of the whole issue, but to contend that no teacher is needed under any circumstance would be to adopt an opposite—and extreme—point of view. One might take the position, "Because so few of these promises have ever been fulfilled, no teacher is needed," but that would be a gross oversimplification. I am certainly

not advocating that we do away with all the teachers! But it is important to be able to distinguish between what is helpful and what is not.

If we want to learn something new—plumbing, cooking, playing tennis, or whatever it is—then it’s always wise to seek the advice of someone who has more experience in that area than we have. If, for instance, we want to climb Mount Everest, we wouldn’t try to do so without a guide. We’d want to learn from someone who’s experientially familiar with Everest, exactly how to reach the summit and what the conditions are going to be along the way. And, we certainly would not attempt Everest alone. Without a guide or our own prior experience, we might end up taking the wrong direction, falling into an abyss, getting buried in an avalanche, or succumbing to high altitude delirium and physical illness.

With mountain climbing, as with teachers, we can find different kinds of guides. Some guides are more likely to get us to the summit. The unerring and clear approach of a direct teacher can take us to the summit. We can have confidence in the accomplishment of someone who has realized the fundamental condition, and who has supported many others in doing the same.

Whatever teaching is most suitable for us, only we can decide, but whatever it is, we must commit to it one hundred percent. The commitment isn’t a small one where we say, “I will try it some days and not others.” If we choose a practice like resting as awareness, but we make only a partial commitment, then some of the time we will be resting, and the rest of the time we will be engaging in the stories of ordinary thinking. If, on the other hand, we make a one hundred percent commitment, then indwelling confidence will develop, and with that confidence certainty will come about.

Sometimes, even if we've really made a firm commitment, the commitment may wane for a while. That's just how it is. If we feel our commitment waning a little, then we simply need to recommit to the decision we've made to rest as awareness, and rely on that alone. It's as simple as that. The truth is that we're always committed either to our points of view or to resting as awareness, so the choice is very simple. A one hundred percent commitment is the easiest, because then there's never any thinking about it. First comes the introduction to resting as awareness, and once we fully recognize what that is, then we can easily make a wholehearted commitment to it.

Another word we could use for commitment is enthusiasm. We really have to have enthusiasm for the true nature of our being. The word "enthusiasm" has its root in the Greek words for "in God," but another way of defining it is a lively interest in the inspiration of being at rest. To be enthusiastic means that we allow our naturally rested condition to be as it is. There should never be a moment without enthusiasm and commitment. Even if we're experiencing the intense emotions of rage, sadness, and depression, we can nevertheless remain totally enthusiastic and committed to awareness as the root of these perceptions.

In this day and age, we should be discerning consumers wherever we shop, and that includes the "spiritual marketplace." We should ask ourselves: "What can I expect from the practice that I'm interested in?" Like any good consumer, before we make the purchase, we should find out if the promised results are actually being delivered. If we want to buy a TV set, an MP3 player, or a car, we'll seek out a store that's provided that product to many satisfied customers. We wouldn't continue going to a store where they said again and again, "Yes, yes, we'll have it for you tomorrow," and then day after day the

item wasn't there. Well, if we have that much discrimination when buying a TV, shouldn't we have at least that much discrimination when we're talking about the most important aspect of human life?

Discernment in seeking a practice is no different from acumen in the business world. We have lots of information today about almost everything, and we also have a lot of information about many different methods and practices. We should be very careful about choosing the teacher and teaching we want to follow. I mean, really, wouldn't we want to choose the approach that's most effective? Resting as awareness has worked for many millions of people throughout time, and no matter who you are or how you've lived, it can work for you also, if you are committed to it. Of all practices, it's the simplest and most direct.

Q: How exactly would you describe enlightenment?

Candice: Enlightenment is described in many ways these days—and increasingly so now with the Internet and the growing number of books on the topic. However, there are very few wisdom texts that actually speak directly about what enlightenment is, and also provide the unerring instruction about its realization.

We don't use the "e-word" in the Great Freedom Teaching, because it's been so tarnished by many years of misinterpretations, and using it would only create confusion. Once we call it "enlightenment," then that might mean that it belonged to a tradition, a religion, an historical figure, or a country. There's simply too much misunderstanding about what the word means for it to be used with people from widely divergent backgrounds. So, we just say "timeless freedom" or "awareness."

What's been termed enlightenment is simply the full revelation of the wisdom body, the seamless expanse of nondual awareness that includes and transcends all. To the degree that we rest as awareness, the qualities of potent benefit inherent in awareness will become obvious, and our lives will be a source of great benefit to others. It's as simple as that.

Q: Aren't these teachings you're giving the same as ones from other teachers that deal with stillness, emptiness, living in the present, or enlightenment?

Candice: Well, I'm not here to comment on any other teaching; I'm just saying that there are two kinds of teachings. One type of teaching occurs within cause and effect, and focuses on getting into a certain state like stillness, emptiness, or living in the present. These are some of the popular contemporary themes. The other type of teaching is beyond causality and does not involve adoption of descriptive frameworks. It is the teaching of resting as awareness, in which everything, moment-to-moment, is absolutely equal and seamless. The goal is already present, and nothing needs to change. Everything, just as it is, unfolds in a continuous open flow of pure presence.

I see in many other approaches that people are able to have a preliminary experience of awareness, but it's like the awareness of a cat watching a mouse. The observer is identified with awareness, and is engaged in observing what appears within awareness, as though it's something different from awareness. In other words, there's still a strong sense of duality between awareness and what appears within it.

Such experiences are vastly different from the complete resolution of all points of view in the basic space of awareness, which is what the Great Freedom Teaching offers. I can only recommend that

you give this Teaching a try. The benefit of resting is immediate, and instantly verifiable. I don't ask that anyone take my word for it; I would suggest giving it a try and finding out for yourself by simply resting for short moments, repeated times, and see what happens.

Maintaining Awareness in Sleep and Dreams

Chapter Twenty

"If we maintain awareness as we drift into sleep, then we will have directly introduced ourselves to awareness in a whole new way. When we accomplish undistracted awareness in sleep, then it will also be much easier for us to enjoy undistracted awareness at other times of the day."

When we go to sleep at night, normally we just sort of conk out, and then some hours later we wake up. Most of us don't have any control over what happens during those hours. When we fall asleep, we're just asleep; we can't consciously do anything while in that state, and consequently we believe that we're at the complete whim of sleep and dreams. We don't know how it all happens, but something is happening to us, and we don't have any power over it.

When we don't recognize the awareness that is at the basis of sleep and dreams, we're just lost in those worlds. When we have a dream, anything can happen in it. It can be the craziest and most bizarre thing or the most sublime thing. All these phantasmagorical images appear, some of which we remember and some we don't. Generally speaking, while in the dream we have no idea that it's a dream, and we take it to be real.

The same can be said for the waking state, which is truly just a dreamlike appearance within the changeless reality of awareness. If we take our bodies and the various events sandwiched between birth and death to be who we are—while ignoring the substratum of awareness that alone can truly be said to exist—the result will be alienation from the timeless freedom and perfect peace that constitute our true nature.

This is what non-recognition of awareness is: being lost in the belief that the thoughts, emotions, and experiences define who we are, and thinking that the states we pass through are real. For the whole of our lives we've been thinking that the everyday states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping are who we are. Most of us are deeply convinced that our birth, life, and death completely define who we are. We think that without them we would not be, and we depend on them for our sense of identity. However, when we rest as awareness, more and more we find that we're not dependent on any concept whatsoever. We're not dependent on the body or the mind, or the waking, sleep, and dream states. We don't even depend on air, the earth, the sun, or even the universe! It's very important to go beyond all the ordinary descriptions we've learned to identify with, and we do that simply by maintaining awareness.

I want to share with you a very powerful practice that can help you use the pivotal moment of falling asleep to discover the substratum of awareness. When we go to sleep at night, we can begin to maintain awareness as we're falling asleep. As we do this, we'll see that all the activity of the conceptual mind—the stirring and proliferation of thoughts and emotions—gradually comes to rest in a non-conceptual state, which is the sleep state. This is still a state of mind, and not real freedom; it's just another point of view within awareness.

At that pivotal moment when we find that all the concepts have come to rest in a non-conceptual state, we can then pose a very important question to ourselves: "What is it that is *aware* of this non-conceptual mind?" This question leads directly into the substratum of pure awareness. By resting as the awareness that is revealed through this inquiry, we will be able to differentiate between the basic space of

awareness, which is our true identity, and the non-conceptual sleep state, which is just another state of mind. When we have discovered the awareness that is the same in all states and conditions, it will become easier and easier to maintain awareness throughout the day and during the night as well.

We don't have to make a big deal out of it. It is as simple as resting for short moments, many times, while falling asleep. This is the single practice with all points of view, including falling asleep, dreaming, and sleeping. If awareness comes easily when falling asleep, it'll come easily, and if it doesn't come easily, we don't try to force it. At some point it may just naturally appear, and we'll fall asleep totally aware and remain aware during our sleep. We don't have to try this every night, but if only once we can be aware in this way as we move into sleep, we will see that sleep and dreams are themselves points of view within awareness. If we maintain awareness as we drift into sleep, then we will have directly introduced ourselves to awareness in a new way. When we accomplish undistracted awareness in sleep, then it will also be much easier for us to enjoy undistracted awareness at other times of the day.

Some people practice remaining aware all night long, even in deep sleep. What's most important about this practice is to see, through firsthand experience, that dreaming and sleeping are appearances of awareness. Through resting as awareness, the three categories we use to describe our 24-hour experience—waking, dreaming, and sleeping—are completely gone beyond. We see that all three of these are just points of view within the all-encompassing pure view of awareness.

When we maintain awareness in the dream state, we realize that all the component parts of the dream can be changed or manipulated

just by deciding to do so. If we choose to do that, we will be able to actively participate in the dreams we have and change what goes on in them. We'll be able to be aware in our dreams and be a master of the illusion of dreaming.

When there is a feeling that we are at the whim of dreams, they seem totally beyond our control. But with the decisive experience of being able to change what is going on in a dream, it becomes possible to directly experience awareness as not only beyond all phenomena, but also as having mastery over all phenomena. However, rearranging the figures in the dream—whether it is the waking dream or the sleeping dream—is not really a pastime we need to get into. In and of itself, it is not a goal worth striving for, but the ability to do so is a natural byproduct of the complete mental mastery that comes through the practice of resting as awareness.

What's most important is to decisively realize awareness as the pure space of all images that occur within it. There's no need at all to try to analyze any of the images, whether they are daytime images or nighttime images. Like all phenomena, the nighttime images in dreams are just self-appearances of awareness, as are the images during waking life. They're identical in that respect. When we acknowledge awareness as the ground of our being by resting imperturbably in the direct encounter with all phenomena, then we realize in a very powerful way that all images that appear are due to awareness and nothing else. So, there's nothing that needs to be done about any of them.

By resting imperturbably as awareness, more and more we know awareness as the benevolent reality of our being, and all phenomena are then seen as benevolent and perfect, just the way they are. They don't need to be analyzed, improved, or changed; in fact, nothing at

all needs to be done about any appearance. If we've been accustomed to analyzing the images in our dreams, this is a perfect opportunity to bring that to a complete stop, for the ultimate substance and meaning of all images is the same. They are all just passing forms of awareness, and that's all we need to know about dreams.

Although most people believe that the waking state is reality and the dream state unreal, the "waking dream" and the "sleeping dream" are identical in that they're both just points of view within the changeless reality of awareness. The wisdom benefit of flawless awareness is completely uncontained and has never been made into anything. Even though the various phenomena that appear in waking states and dream states may seem incredibly substantial, when we examine them, we find that there is nothing holdable or keepable within any appearance. When we maintain awareness in the face of what appears, then we can relax and know that the appearances are nothing at all to be afraid of.

We can rest assured that whatever appears—whether it is an event during the day, or an image in a dream during the night—it is nothing but an appearance of awareness. This understanding is a very powerful resource for working out our daytime points of view. The phantasmagorical content of our dream states at night can bring about a very powerful resolution of points of view within us, so that during the day it will be easier for us to rest as awareness. When we learn to rest with even our most frightening dream imagery, the images we face in our waking state become significantly easier to face.

When we awake in the morning, normally all the points of view of our waking state that were in abeyance during sleep immediately come flooding back in. However, if we rest as awareness in the moment when we wake up and the thoughts return—just as we rested

as the non-conceptual state while going to sleep—we find that we need not get caught up again in the torrent of thoughts and emotions. Giving in to the thoughts that appear when we wake up in the morning is just a habit we've sustained for a long time. It may have seemed that it's impossible to rest because of the immediate onslaught of thoughts. However, if we can maintain awareness, we'll see that we don't necessarily have to be ruled by the thoughts or sensory impressions.

When we sustain awareness as we wake up in the morning, it will be easier for us to see the workings of the mind and not get caught in habitual patterns of identification with passing phenomena. Rest is best upon waking up in the morning; otherwise, we may be tempted to think, "Oh, after such a beautiful vacation in sleep, here's all this garbage again!"

Instead of describing and getting into endless stories about thoughts, emotions, or images—identifying with some thoughts and rejecting others—we can see all phenomena as equal, and just allow the relief of awareness to be our constant comfort. Thoughts and emotions never have an independent nature and will vanish of their own accord, so there's no need to do anything about them. What do we need to do about them when they're going to vanish anyway? If we don't see that thoughts are their own undoing and are free and perfect in their own place, then we'll think we have to do something about them. However, when we practice seeing perfection in all appearances and resting as the awareness that is the substance and essence of all appearances, the illusion of a personal identity and its workings is recognized to be insubstantial and without conflict.

With continued practice, we come to see that awareness pervades not only our waking life, but also sleep and everything that is

contained within sleep. If we bring this presence of awareness to the process of falling asleep, we'll soon see that awareness is present in all that appears.

As we rest more and more, we may eventually feel emboldened to pose the question: "If awareness supersedes waking, dreaming, and sleeping, then could awareness also supersede birth and death?" The question might not mean very much if it remains only a philosophical idea, but if there is a direct experience of awareness as the unchanging basis of *all* phenomena, then something quite extraordinary could occur. One would come to see that even birth and death are just passing points of view within changeless awareness. However, the irrevocable realization of this truth can only come through getting fully acquainted with awareness; mere theoretical acknowledgement is not enough.

It's quite likely that no one has ever told us this very important truth about ourselves, namely, that dreams and sleep and birth and death are just points of view within changeless, timeless awareness. *Each point of view that appears is complete and identical, and equal to every other point of view that appears. There's never been any differentiation, inclusion, or exclusion, because awareness is indivisible—and its own appearances can never affect that oneness.* This is crucially important.

The practice of resting as awareness while falling asleep can help introduce us to the fundamental nature of awareness. Then, while maintaining awareness as we experience the states of sleep and dreams, we can know that it is awareness alone that encompasses and transcends all states of mind. When we've discovered all-encompassing, all-transcending awareness to be our fundamental

nature, the treasure of perfect mental balance becomes our own, and it is a treasure we'll be happy to share with all.

Complete Perceptual Openness

Chapter Twenty-One

"It isn't that there is "someone who is perceptually open" looking at a point of view which is something apart. There is nothing but indivisible awareness manifesting equally as the seer, the seeing, and the seen. The experiencer is indivisible from its experience and its experiencing, and all are mere appearances of awareness."

When we completely relax our seeing without any need to focus on all of the descriptions that we've learned, then we find awareness already present in ourselves—something we may have never before recognized. We're not finding anything new; we're just finding our natural way of looking, sensing, and experiencing the world. It isn't a destination we're going to get to; it has always been present from the very beginning of our life—and even before our conception.

To have complete perceptual openness means to relax our perception into wide-open spaciousness with no need to close in on any thought, emotion, object, or experience to make sense of what's happening. When we completely relax our attention from its habitual pinpointed focus, we see everything as it is: a limitless, seamless expanse of changeless pure awareness, in which myriad ephemeral forms of awareness appear and disappear. Most of us have learned to fix our attention on whatever is appearing and to describe it as if it had a separate existence. However, when we do so, we immediately disconnect from our natural openness and collapse into the idea of a separate self that relies on thought to describe what's going on. When we have this individualized thinking and the fear-based emotional field that thinking creates, then we're very restricted and limited to that

emotional field. We live on the head of a pin when we do that, and that's a very cramped and uncomfortable space!

When we relax our perception from that narrow focus, then we discover the vast openness of what's right here, the ground reality that is completely beyond any of the information contained within it. In that spaciousness there's no need to use any kind of limited information to describe what's going on. When we relax into our own wide-open seeing, then we enter the primordial space of wisdom and all-knowingness. There's just complete perceptual openness in the immediacy of all experience, and in that is inherent benefit for all beings, including ourselves.

All the contrived notions of needing to describe a world and its beings in myriad ways are simply conventions and beliefs, and they're entirely made up. The supreme oneness that is our true identity is equally present everywhere and is the sole underlying reality of all forms and situations. If we describe ourselves as the thinking and emotions that we've accumulated over our lifetime, then we separate ourselves out from the enjoyment of what is immediately open, spacious, free, and timeless. We may be doing something as simple as buying a shirt at a store, but if there is complete perceptual openness in that experience, then Wal-Mart becomes a temple, because *everything* is seen as a temple of nondual equalness.

Awareness—complete perceptual openness—is the sovereign ruler of all. It is the greatest of monarchs, and everything is united within it; in fact, everything within it, *is* it! There's never been any kind of separation. We don't need to figure out any pieces of the puzzle to understand the puzzle. To describe this in philosophical terms and come to an intellectual understanding is one thing, but to really know it fully we have to decisively experience it in our own

being. To do so, we just relax in naturally present openness that is the natural presence of uncontrived love, wisdom, and energy, for short moments repeated many times. This is the easiest way, and the most ancient of ways. What is being stated here is not new. Throughout human history there have always been people who have discovered their true nature through the way of rest.

The uncontrived presence of love, wisdom, and energy is always wide-open and completely relaxed; it is never tight, tense, or restricted. It has never been made into anything, or tied up into a thought, emotion, or experience of any kind. Always and forever flawless, stainless, and totally free, it has no need to depend on anything. It stands alone, which really means “all-one.” It is the all-encompassing super-complete wholeness. To say that it depends on something would make it incomplete, and that can never be.

We shouldn’t be satisfied with somebody’s idea about what this perceptual openness is; we need to take it all the way in terms of our own experience. If we get locked into ideas about what different historical figures or contemporary figures have said about the ultimate reality, then it really limits our own familiarity with it. Complete perceptual openness is not anything that someone can give us or take away from us. If anyone is telling us that the nature of our being will be realized through their grace, we just need to relax and recognize that grace is synonymous with awareness and is not given by someone else.

It doesn’t matter where we are, who we are, how we’re feeling emotionally, what we’re thinking, what our job is, what our gender is, what our skin color is, how old we are, or anything else we can describe about our body or mind—we’re always and forever beyond all those descriptions. In every era of humankind, the descriptions about

the body and mind change radically. There was one way of describing the body and mind a hundred years ago, there is a way of describing them now, and a hundred years from now there'll be something completely different. The good news is that our fundamental condition never changes and is beyond any description. Anything that we describe about our body and mind has nothing to say about our fundamental condition, and our fundamental condition doesn't depend on anything we can say about our body and mind.

The conventional understanding is that we are dependent on the organs of the body, the air coming in and out, and the water and food we eat, drink, digest, and excrete, but the truth is that we're not dependent on any of that to be aware. Awareness is permanent, limitless, and forever free, and it requires nothing: not the breath, not a body, not even the existence of the universe.

We are the primordial condition in which the entire universe appears and disappears. When we enjoy complete perceptual openness in the immediacy of every moment, then we come to decisively experience that in a way that is unarguable and unimaginable.

Luminous mind is the nature of everyone, and it doesn't matter what the previous thoughts, emotions, and actions have been. The true nature of luminous mind is untouched by any of those things, and is always completely available. Whether the actions or thoughts have been moral or immoral, social or antisocial, the mind which contains them is completely luminous, wide-open, and free. The wondrous display of points of view is just whatever it is, but whether it's a horror show or a charming fairy tale makes no difference to the awareness in which it all appears. To try to rearrange the perceptions or to think that it has to be this way or that way is to enter into more duality.

Of course, the ordinary thinking mind tends to balk at this. "How could moral and immoral perceptions be equal? How could antisocial and well-socialized activity be equal?" But the wisdom of luminous mind doesn't need to divide everything up into tight little categories that the thinking mind can grasp. The natural activity of luminous mind remains at ease regardless of what appears, and no matter what appears, it is all like a burst of the infinite light of wisdom mind. Whatever descriptions are given to the appearances, they are all equally free and spacious. They are indivisible from awareness and do not have a beginning, middle, or end.

This morning I was drying my hair, and I was noticing how the hairdryer takes air in from the back, warms it up, and then directs it out from the front end. I saw that if the back end got blocked somehow, and the air couldn't flow through easily, the whole thing would overheat and melt. That is kind of what happens when we train our perception to focus on points of view instead of resting in the spaciousness in which the points of view appear. When we focus on everything that appears and try to define it all, the life-giving flow of wide-open awareness and the continuous flow of tremendous energy of love and wisdom that is naturally present are blocked. This is how modern minds are trained to function. No effort is required to get acquainted with perceptual openness. If we repeatedly relax our body and mind, the perceptual openness that is our true nature will begin to flow naturally, and we'll discover basic goodness, warmth, and compassion that are spontaneously present.

It isn't that there is "someone who is perceptually open" looking at a point of view which is something apart. There is nothing but indivisible awareness manifesting equally as the seer, the seeing, and the seen. The experiencer is indivisible from its experience and its

experiencing, and all are mere appearances of awareness. We train ourselves in the belief that there is a separate perceiver, but when we maintain unwavering awareness and gain confidence in it, we don't have to worry about any of these philosophical concepts. We relax and allow awareness to be as it is, and in the wisdom of that, all questions are answered.

When we're resting as awareness, we're not looking for awareness; we simply are as we are. If what's looking is looking for itself, and believes it will find it elsewhere, it's going to get very confusing! Rest as awareness alone, which is the source of the looking. This is naked awareness that's forever undistracted by whatever appears. Forever empty awareness is the source condition of all. All points of view that occur within forever empty awareness are already completely relaxed, as they are nothing but the pure sky of awareness. There is never any effort needed to rest as the essence of what's looking. If you rest as what's looking, pretty soon you'll see that what's looking is not limited to you. It's not trapped within the skin line of your body. It is awareness itself, and awareness is without boundaries. It is the raw intelligence of nature, the universe, and all the universe contains. Awareness is not an object to look for. It's always here as the looking itself. When we enjoy just that, without seeking anything or describing anything that appears, then that pure looking—unattached as it is to an individual looker or point of view that is looked at—is discovered to be timelessly present, everywhere.

But if we continue to focus on points of view, we will always be involved in the labels and tangled up in dictionary definitions of appearances. We'll always be trying to convince ourselves that life makes sense by putting together an endless string of words. However, all the words in the dictionary point to a specific definition of

something as existing in its own right—as something fixed, stable, and solid that can be separated out from everything else and depended upon in some way. But if all those seemingly fixed and solid things were put into a linear particle accelerator, we would find they are all made of nothing but space. Space is the one underlying reality shared by all things. The partial definitions in the dictionary are therefore not only misleading, they have nothing to tell us about our fundamental condition or the condition of anything! As long as the fundamental aspect of the defined phenomena is missing, the definition is incomplete and inaccurate.

We can rectify this situation by adding an ultimate meaning to every word in the dictionary, and that is, “the pure presence of nature’s indivisible and aware intelligence, dynamic and unconfined, devoid of an independent nature.” If we add that phrase to all the definitions in the dictionary, then we can begin to know what everything really is. Every word in the dictionary has therefore these two aspects: its aspect as a description or label, and its forever empty, always abiding and resting aspect that is the aware intelligence at the basis of everything. These two together inseparably comprise the forever empty awareness that manifests as all we see. In other words, there is no two!

Awareness is our natural being, and to experience that natural being in a definitive way moment-to-moment requires complete perceptual openness in all experience. By simply hearing about it over and over again, the certainty about it will dawn. Nothing else is required. As we relax, we’ll find that our perception naturally eases and becomes more and more open and free. Whatever appears will then be seen as inseparable from restful openness. After having lived with constant anxiety due to all the years of focusing on passing points

of view, the ease of rest will be a welcome discovery. Once complete mental relaxation has been tasted, even for one moment, the mind will naturally go to that relief again and again. Short moments repeated many times become automatic.

Q: All of us have the very real experience each day of the various aspects of happy and sad, good and bad, positive and negative, so it's really hard for me to get my head around this idea of the equalness of all appearances, because this is just not something that I've experienced in my own life. Could you maybe help me understand how things are ultimately equal?

C: All things are ultimately equal because all things have the same changeless essence. The basic space of mind is always in complete equilibrium and evenness, and whatever appears within the mind is made only of that basic space. That awareness is the reality, whereas the inner and outer phenomena that come and go within it are like images seen in a mirage. Whether we label the images good or bad, or painful or pleasurable, doesn't change their mirage-like nature. The reality underlying all of them is the same.

All of us have observed as we age that over time the reflection in the mirror is changing as our physical appearance changes. But almost all of us have also had the experience of knowing that what is looking at that image in the mirror has never changed. The image I've seen in the mirror has varied, as I went from being 5 years old to 10 years to 20 to 40 and now to 60. The face of a young girl has now changed into someone who is getting wrinkles and gray hair, but *what's looking* is completely unaffected by all these physical changes. The face is different, but the essence of who I am has always remained the same.

If we rest as the equilibrium and immutability of what's looking, then we can let thoughts and appearances come and go without needing to label them or give them importance. We drain ourselves of our vitality when we persist in holding to the importance of something that is nothing other than an appearance of awareness. Whether we label an impression of the mind as anger or joy, it's of the same basic space. When we start to think that some things are good and other things are bad, we fall out of the total simplicity of the great equalness into a realm of division and endless complexity. When we give thoughts and emotions significance in their own right, we're ignoring the changeless basis of all the thoughts. We just don't notice that it's there.

When we discover spacious awareness, wise and free, we see that all appearances are sourced in that. Then the equalness of all becomes self-evident. If you write the word "fear" and the word "happiness" in the air with your finger, is there really fear or happiness in either of them? They're both just space, and are completely equal. Resting as the basic space of awareness means complete perceptual openness in all experience. It means complete ease with no need to cling to anything or push anything away; it means not attempting to describe or define the indescribable. Awareness reveals itself everywhere as a single nondual expanse. There is no need to think about it, toy with it, or write a philosophy book about it. It's just so simple; who we are couldn't be simpler! Awareness, by which we know we are, is timelessly free. We wouldn't even know that we are present without awareness. Where would we be looking for it and who would look, as both are points of view of awareness? If you say, "I am looking for awareness," then you are stepping away from it, because

awareness is what's looking. What's looking is a natural resource of indestructible wisdom.

If we're worried about the depletion of natural resources on planet Earth, it is important to recognize the ultimate natural resource—awareness—and rely on that, and then by the power of its wisdom, insight, and skillful activities, we can begin to solve the many problems that have come about from having exhausted the Earth's natural resources. When we rely on wisdom, then we are naturally of benefit to ourselves and all beings, and we enact this in a very immediate way.

The personal stories we had about things that once bothered us and really got us upset—stories about fear, anger, jealousy, pride, or desire—we see that somehow these things do not affect us anymore or affect us less and less. We may have told stories based on cause and effect: "I am angry because...", or "I am jealous because...", but now we see that there is something about us that is beyond causation. Now that there is just the relaxed awareness of what's looking, where are all those causes and effects? Where we used to have a story, there isn't a story any longer.

For most people this comes about gradually. As we continue to rest in the face of whatever appears, disturbing states that once would have upset us now gradually begin to vanish in and of their own accord like the flight path of a bird in the sky. We remain like the sky, ever free.

Q: I have a lot of doubts about my being able to have the perceptual openness that you describe. I have a very stressful job that has a lot of pressure and high-level responsibility, and I am in some way or another working at this job almost all the waking hours of each day. If

I just relax in the way that you are talking about, I could never get my job done.

Candice: Your own circumstances, whatever they may be, are always the perfect opportunity for rest. Whether you're in a high-stress job or doing nothing, whatever your points of view are, they're the perfect opportunity to rest. I know this without any doubt. However, you must be willing to make resting as awareness a priority in your life and find a few moments here and there throughout the day to practice resting. Anyone can do that, no matter what the job is. You just have to make the choice. In the long run those few moments of rest will make you much more efficient and productive in your job, and more successful in every aspect of your life.

If you continue to practice resting as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, soon you'll be resting without trying to do so. For most, progress is made gradually. No matter how doubting, cynical, or skeptical you might be right now, if you keep resting as awareness every day as is being suggested here, I can guarantee you that you'll eventually come to me and say, "I didn't think it would ever happen to me, but it has!" Resting as awareness is the swift and sure approach. Don't be fooled by thinking you need to do anything else.

Even if your day is filled with stressful activities, remember that your entire life is a free-flowing appearance of awareness. That fundamental condition is always present and always aware of whatever stressful activities are occurring. Wide-open spaciousness is the true nature of your mind, and it is never anything other than that. It is urgently important to know that about yourself and to never collapse into mundane ideas about who you are.

Who we are as human beings is extraordinarily simple, and today there are many, many people who can realize this. It may not have been so easy for people to understand a message like this at other times in history, but today it is.

Awareness is total love, total splendor, and extraordinary energy with no possibility whatsoever of being disconnected from anyone or anything. We are limitless and beyond all fear by virtue of our fundamental condition. There is no need to defend or protect negative or positive states of mind, because nothing can ever happen to the awareness that is the source of their appearance. Even your own life does not need to be guarded, because what you are does not depend on a life. You are the timeless essence of life itself.

Simply develop great enthusiasm for resting as awareness and persevere in a cheerful, caring, and relaxed way. Short moments, repeated many times will carry you through.

Decisions without Decision-Making

Chapter Twenty-Two

"If you're struggling to make a decision, you might want to ask yourself, "Which choice will be of the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people and to myself?" That's a simple and straightforward guideline for making decisions."

Many people struggle long and hard in making decisions, trying to think out every possible angle; they may even torture themselves emotionally by imagining all the possible ways things could go wrong and then blame themselves for their indecisiveness. The good news is that thoughts and emotions aren't necessary for decision-making! Thoughts and emotions are a limited basis for good decision-making and are only a small part of our capabilities.

If we had a recipe for a great cake, but used only a few of the required ingredients, no one would want to eat our cake! Similarly, relying solely on our thoughts and emotions is like using only part of the ingredients required to make good decisions.

Haven't we noticed how our obsessive thinking and emotions work? "Oh, I have to make a decision. Is this going to be the right decision, or should I have chosen the other option?" Then after making the decision there is more thinking and emotion: "Is this what I should be doing? Is this going to work out all right for me?" This idea that we have to think continuously about everything in order to arrive at any conclusion is simply a habit.

Within the perfect ease discovered by maintaining awareness lies wisdom that is entirely non-conceptual, beneficial, and super-complete in itself. The more we rest as awareness, the more we really know that we don't have to micro-manage all of our thoughts and emotions.

We can't plan what is going to happen. In fact, the only thing we can count on is that we *don't know* what's going to happen! So, why come up with all these ideas about what should happen? When we rest as awareness and start to trust the natural order of everything, then we have insights that are truly worth having. They aren't like the kind of ideas we've had before; they are wisdom insights. The more we rest, the more we trust this wisdom. Our decisions then flow with the natural order of everything, and everything is effortlessly the way it is. I used to toy with decisions, but now I never do.

Q: I'm dealing with an illness that involves making a lot of decisions about health care, and quite frankly, I feel very unsure about the proper decisions to make. How could I use what you're saying in a practical way to make these very crucial decisions?

Candice: As we become more adept at resting, we find that we can be at ease in all situations, and we know how to respond, whatever the situations are.

Nowadays, we have a lot of very different lifestyle choices, and a wide variety of healthcare options as well. When a decision has to be made about what care is needed, one person might choose to go to a medical doctor, another might go see an Ayurvedic practitioner, while another might try a nutritionist. In other countries someone might go to a shaman or village healer. In an emergency, one person may use as many telephones as they can to call 911, while another person may decide to not call for assistance at all. Whatever happens is just fine. It is all appearing in, of, as, and through the same unalterable, unchangeable awareness.

When dealing with illness, one choice might be to not have any intervention at all. I've seen a number of examples where people have

received a very frightening diagnosis but have chosen to not have any kind of invasive treatment. I know of one woman in particular who had been diagnosed with cancer, and she decided to not have any medical intervention at all. She saw all of her children in the last year of her life, and the night before she died, she had dinner with one of her sons. She wanted him to know how thankful she was that he was her son and that they had shared a wonderful life together. The next day she was gone. She was able to understand that she had choices. Those choices came from being profoundly at ease with her human nature and knowing herself so well that she saw exactly what the right course of action was for her. It has to be entirely up to us; no one can tell us what the right course of action is.

If we are resting profoundly as awareness, then we will have a cornucopia of choices, because rather than just seeing one option, we are able to see all options. When we deeply acknowledge who we are in a very simple way, then it becomes easy for us to act as nature does. After all, we are nature—human nature—and we are profound participants in nature’s intelligence, which is completely at rest and at ease. Even chaos, confusion, and war all appear in the natural order and resolve into it as well. When we rest the mind completely in all situations, we act as nature does, and we are in harmony with the natural order of everything. The awareness that is looking, touching, tasting, and sensing through us is always completely at ease, no matter what the emotional or physical states are. Whatever we decide to do with our life, it is perfect, and we do it with complete ease.

Now, whenever I talk about rest or ease in the West, people think that I’m talking about being a couch potato, but that’s not my meaning. The ease of our own awareness will guide us in how to act most skillfully. For people who are resting without trying to do so,

there is only immense energy, love, and wisdom that shower benefit everywhere. Our minds and bodies have one single purpose, and that is to benefit ourselves and others. That means that we treat ourselves and others in a natural and friendly way that comes from being at ease in our being.

So, if you're struggling to make a decision, you might want to ask yourself, "Which choice will be of the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people and to me?" That's a simple and straightforward guideline for making decisions.

Q: Do we begin to make different choices as we rest more as awareness?

Candice: I'll share an experience from my own life in that regard. I am married and I have children and grandchildren, so I have lived the life of a householder for at least part of my life. But then ten years ago, I decided to go live alone at the Great Freedom Sanctuary in California. That just came about naturally, because my life became more and more committed to the benefit of all, and my primary focus had become the Great Freedom Teaching. I have complete, loving, wonderful relationships with all members of my family, including my husband, and the relationships are better than they've ever been. It just naturally came about that I would be living in another way. So, this is just the way it is, and there is nothing to think or worry about—it just naturally occurs.

Q: I have a lot of trouble making decisions, and I find that the period while I am trying to decide can be very stressful. The same sort of stressful circumstance is at work when I have to prepare for something

where my performance will be judged, like say, giving a speech in front of people. Do you have suggestions to help with that?

Candice: Our natural way of speaking is completely uncontrived and doesn't require any studying or preparation. Everything happens in a completely relaxed way, and we know this through simply resting as awareness no matter what's going on. However, when we're caught up in a personal identity, we might work on a speech for days, read through several books and spend hours on the Internet looking up things to make sure that everything will be included. We'll be so nervous that the night before the presentation we won't sleep much, because we'll be thinking about everything else that should go into the speech!

So, don't dive into a scenario where your identity is based on your accumulation of thoughts, emotions, experiences, and conceptual frameworks. If you are able to just rest, you are greatly fortunate, because that means you've experienced a decisive openness that allows you to relax with no need to rely on conceptual frameworks. In that openness there is the ability to understand the underlying implications of what I'm saying in a broader scope. There is then no need to get upset and worried about all those speeches you may need to give.

In the conventional way of thinking about things, intellectual prowess is valued very much, and if we show that our intellectual prowess is better than everybody else's, then we're really at the top of the heap! However, when it comes to getting acquainted with who we really are, intellectual prowess is a small reward when compared to the vital knowledge of pristine awareness. The constant efforting of intellectual prowess is evidence of an inability to relax. But when there is total rest, there is thinking without any thinking. The best thinking

simply appears in the effortless, non-conceptual space of awareness. The melodious song and dance of awareness appears naturally without ever needing to twist thoughts into a certain shape or language, and from that the most sublime words will flow. The intellectual prowess that is so highly prized nowadays is gone beyond in pristine wisdom.

Relax completely. Even if you have a propensity to intellectually scrutinize, examine, and speculate about everything, relax as the essence of all the intellectual speculation. Whatever your circumstantial thoughts, emotions, and experiences are, they are all okay. Whether you are an intellectual analyzer or subject to effusive displays of emotion—all is the magical display of awareness.

Q: So, do you prepare for your talks or do you just wing it?

Candice: To begin with, no, I don't prepare what I'm going to say. Whatever is said is just an expression of dynamic benefit, of complete responsiveness to whatever is occurring right here. There isn't any need to memorize, study, learn, make an outline, get nervous, wonder what everyone is going to think, or if it will be liked; none of that is going on.

We learn in the course of our lives that in order to be smart or to speak well, we have to learn a lot and gain knowledge from outside ourselves and get it inside ourselves. All this activity is associated with the point of view that there is a personal identity doing all these things. The personal identity is just a conventional belief, and when it is looked into, the personal identity can't really be shown to exist in its own right. That's a huge relief, because when we no longer have this personal identity to feed, then we can just relax and feel total relief. Everything we need is already present. The thoughts we need to be

thinking, the wisdom we need to have, what we need to know, and the ability to speak about it—all these things are already present.

Q: I really resonate with what you said before about thinking too much about things. I'm one of those people who always has to figure it out with their intellect.

Candice: If you're a big thinker, then just relax! We as a species have seen that our thinking has led to many problems. We've created so many problems in our own habitat, and no matter how many thoughtful solutions we've put into solving them, many problems still seem insurmountable. Does that mean that we can't solve them and that we're doomed to extinction? No, it doesn't. It means that we need to make a shift from our primitive mind into the mind that has complete familiarity with nature's intelligence—which is inclusive of conceptual frameworks of cause and effect, but which remains always beyond causality.

Nature is the sole cause and the sole effect. That intelligence knows that all causes are uncaused. If you're playing around with all the ideas about cause and effect, and you don't know that the causes are uncaused, your efforts are going to go essentially nowhere. This is the calamity that we face today as human beings. It is a calamity within ourselves, and it is a calamity for us as a species.

There are a lot of people who are thinking, "Okay, wisdom, yeah, I gotta think my way into that. I've got to go to at least three universities and keep attaching letters to the end of my name: M.A., Ph.D., M.D., and maybe a B.S." Well, you know, B.S. actually has two meanings! We continue going after wisdom in that way, because we don't know any other approach.

However, what will be achieved through this type of thinking could be called “common wisdom.” It’s wisdom based on points of view and is not true wisdom at all. So, do we want to identify with that kind of intellectual achievement, or do we want to rest as the wisdom that’s at the root of nature itself and which is tapped into only in uncontrived rest? There are a lot of people wrapped up in thinking, thinking, thinking—and then thinking more about what they’ve been thinking! That type of thinking is really a barrier.

When one is completely at ease, there are no big decisions anymore. You know what big decisions are? They are ones that involve a lot of thought, emotional activity, mood swings, and doubts about the decision. But when there’s complete responsive ease in relationship to everything that’s appearing, the unnecessary thinking and emotional activity just kind of slip out of life and become unnecessary.

In resting as awareness there is tremendous power, energy, force, and creativity. Just on a simple human level there is immense brainpower that wasn’t there before. When the brain is in the sub-optimal condition of trying to sort everything and make sense out of it, then the brain is completely de-energized, because its natural state isn’t acknowledged. In restfully sustained awareness, there is tremendous intellectual and emotional power, and with it, the energy to be of benefit to others and oneself. This comes about naturally from resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times.

The Qualities of Awareness

Chapter Twenty-Three

"Awareness is shared by everyone, and doesn't belong to any kind of category, institution, philosophy, or religion. It has never been owned by any country or any person; it is the great treasure equally owned by all. We can either become familiar with it, or continue living in the poverty of points of view."

The natural state of the human mind is completely clear and relaxed at all times. It is inherently open, and infused with clarity that is present in every moment. This clear mind registers different impressions that are called thoughts. Many of us learn that our mind is comprised of these thoughts, and we learn to pay attention only to them; we never learn anything about the completely relaxed, clear, stable, insightful, and skillful nature of the mind itself. Most of us do not even know that this clear basis of the mind is there. Even if we hear something about the clarity of the mind, we're so convinced that we're flawed that we can't bring ourselves to believe it—and even if we *are* able to believe in it theoretically, we think it couldn't possibly apply to us!

This is because we've trained ourselves to pay attention to each and every thought, and to believe those thoughts define who we are. Although we continue to try, we just can't get rid of negative thoughts completely. We take our identity to be the history of all the thoughts and experiences we've had throughout our life, and for most of us that paints a rather mixed picture. If we think we are an accumulation of all of our thoughts and points of view, then we will feel batted around like a ping-pong ball by life, as we are knocked back and forth from one thought to another, constantly seeking better thoughts, and trying to

avoid the unpleasant ones. We seek better emotions and better experiences, and we try to avoid the bitter ones, but we're never fully successful in that endeavor because it's impossible.

As we've surely learned by now, thoughts and experiences have a life of their own. Even if we try our whole life to tame and control them, we will never succeed in finding permanent happiness that way; real happiness just isn't found in trying to control the uncontrollable.

Rather than being ruled by thoughts and emotions, or trying in vain to tame them, it's much better to just relax and enjoy gaining confidence in stable awareness. When we rest as awareness, we discover that we're already whole and complete, and always have been. We discover the ease of being that is unaffected by the contents of the mind. Maintaining awareness means letting go of identification with the ping-pong ball of thought, and discovering that we are the table of awareness: the table is stable while the ball comes and goes on its surface. No longer trying to control the game, we no longer get whacked; and soon we discover the peace unaffected by gain or loss.

In resting as awareness, there is nothing to be sought and no one to seek. If you think there's someone to seek something, then you'll always be looking at an ever-receding horizon. Seeking and efforting is like running on a hamster wheel and imagining you'll reach the horizon someday. So, if you think you are a seeker, just relax. Call off the search, and simply rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times. The seeker and the sought appear and disappear within the perfect stability of awareness, which is their common source.

There are certain kinds of wisdom that can be learned by putting many points of view together, for instance, by studying an academic subject. But the profound wisdom that understands the nature of all

phenomena is beyond that. The power of profound wisdom doesn't require learning or studying. It doesn't need any contrived ways of thinking, acting, or speaking, nor does it require collecting certain kinds of thoughts, emotions, or experiences in order to be wise. It is completely beyond the grind of thinking and is not born between the pages of a philosophy book. It needs no opinions whatsoever, and has no need to prove itself or to argue or refute anything. It sees everything as it truly is, and rests in peace and equanimity. It has remarkable insights and tremendous energy to skillfully enact wisdom.

The profound wisdom of awareness has its own natural moral and ethical code and does not need a rulebook. Relying on the wisdom of awareness, our actions will naturally be loving and helpful to others. Having discovered all-pervading awareness, our focus will no longer be so identified with our individual needs, and will increasingly be on the benefit of all.

Awareness is shared by everyone, and doesn't belong to any kind of category, institution, philosophy, or religion. It has never been owned by any country or any person; it is the great treasure equally owned by all. We can either become familiar with it, or continue living in the poverty of points of view. When we do get familiar with awareness, we have a balanced view that is beyond causality. We see that all thoughts, emotions, and phenomena are of the same essence, and are really our allies. They're all appearances of awareness, all reflections of our own perfection, and we see that we've never been harmed by any of them. It is only due to having interpreted them as harmful that we trained ourselves to believe they can cause harm. When we have that equality of vision, then the benevolent nature of all phenomena will be our constant experience.

Nonetheless, if we continue to take some appearances to be monsters, then that will be our experience. If we think we are ruled by our thoughts and emotions, then we will be. However, the more we identify with stable awareness, the more we see that awareness is not affected by any appearance, and that the labels we have put on everything are merely descriptions pasted onto indivisible perfection. After discovering awareness, we see the essence of awareness in all, and this means that we exhibit fearlessness, even in situations of great fear!

Beyond all the labeling of thoughts as good and bad is the natural wisdom that is completely spontaneous and always present. Our natural state is completely at ease with whatever is occurring. It is wisdom “on the fly,” which means that it is without any forethought or afterthought. When we are established in that wisdom, we don’t need to think for long periods of time in order to come to a decision, nor will we regret our decisions or feel the need to justify them. Universal wisdom will be flowing through us, and we’ll know it because we’ll be resting in that wisdom.

Of course, I can sit here and talk about this all day, but unless each person gets familiar with it in their own experience, there will be no real knowledge of what I am talking about. We can’t think ourselves into this. We can, of course, gain some superficial understanding of it through thinking about it, but that’s not enough. We need to decisively experience the basis of everything in order to allow that wisdom to become totally alive within us. This is within the scope of everyone—anyone can do it. It’s like a dimmer switch. When you turn it, the light becomes gradually brighter. The more we rest, the brighter the light of awareness grows. The only reason we haven’t known this about ourselves is because we were never exposed to

knowledge of it. If we have only taken ourselves to be the descriptions that have been handed down to us by others, then we won't have the clear view of awareness; we'll be mired in points of view. We will only see what we've been taught, and generally speaking, that's a long way from wisdom.

The only way to fully realize true wisdom is to relax and allow the thinking to do whatever it will. As you rest as awareness, which is the basis of all thoughts, the wisdom that has all along been ignored becomes more and more obvious. When we relax and just allow all the thoughts and emotions to do whatever they will, our mind opens up, and the clear light of wisdom dawns quite naturally. Just to see the background of ordinary thinking even once is very self-affirming, because we are able to glimpse awareness which is changeless, permanent, and forever free from suffering. Even though we may have searched for all kinds of ways to bring an end to our inner disharmony, in one instant of the clear light of awareness, we find within ourselves the key to the relief from all suffering.

During the night, the lights of the stars and planets can easily be seen because of the darkness, but during the day the radiant light of the sun outshines everything, and none of the stars or planets are visible. The dim light of the stars and planets is still there, but it is completely outshone by the sun. Similarly, stable awareness is like a clear sky filled with pure, bright daylight. Although thoughts and impressions may still appear, they are now fully outshone by the radiant light of awareness.

When the true nature of the mind is evident, the impressions continue to exist, but they are no longer the interpretative context that gives meaning to life. The clear light of awareness is now seen to be the one reality underlying all appearances, and that fundamental truth

provides life's true meaning in all circumstances. Only with this revelation of the true nature of our mind can we find real happiness. When we give this to ourselves by the power of resting in a totally uncontrived way, for short moments, repeated many times until it becomes spontaneous and automatic, then we give ourselves the greatest and most precious gift human life can offer.

No matter who you are, what I'm saying applies to you. The pure light of awareness shines through all eyes, no matter whose eyes they are. It's not a mysterious or esoteric matter. The best way to describe it is to say that, when we get familiar with awareness, we just feel better all the time.

When we enjoy the ease of our own being, we become wise beyond compare. What exactly does it mean to be wise? It means that we know which mountains to climb. Others may choose their own mountains as they see fit, but most of those mountains are not worth climbing. If we are committed to resting as awareness, a very powerful source of wisdom will open up within us, and we will have a completely balanced view that will guide us in taking only the wisest actions. Tremendous energy will spontaneously arise that will bring forth greater levels of wisdom and knowledge which are devoted to activities that are of service to all.

All-encompassing awareness contains all knowledge—not just things we have personally learned, but *all* knowledge: past, present, and future. It may seem inconceivable to us that the mind that is concentrated here in our own body actually contains all knowledge, but the more familiar we get with awareness as the basis of all thoughts, the more we'll discover that it's true. Instinctive knowledge begins appearing within us that gives us all we need to know in every situation we face. In addition, we find we have more skill in virtually

everything we do, and are able to use those skills in a way that is far more powerful than anything we had ever known before.

Now, since we're talking about the wisdom inherent in awareness, it's important to have a very clear idea of what awareness actually is.

Awareness is that by which we know we exist. It is the fundamental essence or pure intelligence by which everything is known. We would not have any awareness of our own existence without indestructible awareness. It is the timeless ground of nature's intelligence in which all phenomena arise and pass away, and it is unaffected by changes such as birth and death.

Awareness has four primary qualities. The first is rich and vital *openness*. To say that awareness is open means that although it contains within itself all phenomena, it is, in the final analysis, unobstructed and *phenomena-less*. It has never been made into anything, or entangled in anything, and is completely wide-open and free. Everything that appears within it *is* it. Awareness has never had any taint, flaw, or stain anywhere within it. When we rest as awareness, we rest as the complete openness of everything. That openness is not a void—it is the central vigor of awareness itself. It can also be called the primordial basic space that contains and transcends all. Nothing that appears within awareness has an independent nature, substance, or identity in its own right. Awareness is the one reality of all.

No matter how much power we thought any appearance had in the past, when we rest with that appearance, we find that its true nature is stainless space. Again, we don't know that by merely thinking about it. We know that through relaxing in the natural ease of awareness that is the essence of our own being.

The second quality of awareness is *indescribability*. This means that awareness cannot be characterized in any way or expressed in words, and so we no longer make the attempt. Seeing the folly in using concepts to try to define awareness in order to grasp it, we let go of concepts altogether and just rest. Awareness is beyond any descriptions, and the attempt to describe it just creates more points of view. Rather than relying on descriptions, we rest as this great emptiness that cannot be described and does not need to be described. In that is found true freedom. There is no contradiction in expressing the fact that awareness is inexpressible; what I am speaking about here is in the context of nothing needing to be said or described ultimately.

The third essential quality of awareness is that it is *spontaneously present*—already fully present within us, and therefore is not a goal. In stainless space, there is no destination or goal anywhere. Awareness is timeless and location-less; it doesn't have a periphery, and its center is everywhere! It is complete and identical in every single moment. There is no need for thoughts such as: "Am I there yet?" or, "When am I going to be there?" or, "I was there, but then I fell out of it." All those thoughts appear and disappear only in awareness; there is never any leaving it. To rest as 'no goal' is freedom itself, for when we drop the idea of a goal, we discover that what we've been seeking is already here. There is no need to think about it, write about it, or speak about it. Just rest! Rest is best.

Where there is no goal, there's no need for effort. No effort is needed to pour light into light, or space into space. If we draw a circle around a little section of sky, that wouldn't mean that portion of the sky has actually been separated from the rest of the sky; the sky is indivisible. In the same way, there is no way to separate anything out

from flawless awareness. Since all is seen as equal and completely pure, to rest as awareness means the complete perceptual openness of the here and now—spacious and free—with nothing needing to be done. The fourth essential quality of awareness is *indivisibility*. The sun of awareness shines illuminating the entirety of points of view. All points of view are embraced as a single self-knowing awareness. All positive, neutral, and negative points of view arise from the basic space of awareness, and are automatically resolved as they appear.

Therefore, all points of view are a single, nondual expanse of awareness that is vital, dynamic, unchangeable, unalterable, and unfabricated in any way.

So these are the four primary qualities of awareness: openness, indescribability, spontaneous presence, and indivisibility. When we focus on these qualities, we find they are ever-open doorways into our awareness—doorways that are gently opened by resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times. We then discover awareness to be an unending fount of love, wisdom, energy, and potently beneficial compassion.

Q: On the one hand I find what you're saying very inspiring, but on the other, to hear these things really depresses me. Given the life situation and outer circumstances that I have, I don't think it will ever be possible for me to realize the natural wisdom you're speaking about. Do you have any advice?

Candice: First of all, I want to tell you that there is absolutely no obstacle whatsoever to your realizing this wisdom. Just keep coming back, keep listening to the Teachings, and if you continue to rest as awareness, confidence and certainty will dawn within you. Experiment a little with resting, just for short moments. Don't push for anything;

relax the body and mind completely and see what happens. That's very easy. Test it to see if this is of benefit to you. Keep listening, and the Teaching will definitely have its effect.

The circumstances of your life are never an obstacle to resting as awareness; they're actually the perfect situation for becoming aware. Anything that can be described between the bookends of birth and death is nothing other than an appearance that is due to awareness itself. Whether it seems to be located inside or out, it's all due to the same awareness. We may have descriptions about our life situation, our outer circumstances, and about where we are and where we need to get to, and there are many ways of describing everything that is occurring, but what can be counted on totally is the restful essence of awareness. Just relax in that.

I also want to encourage you to reach out for the support the Great Freedom organization offers. There are many wonderful teachers available twenty-four hours a day to give support by telephone or email. We have meetings and Teachings face-to-face, and via teleconference or the web. In Great Freedom, we have the Four Comforts: resting as awareness, the teacher, the Teaching, and the community. They are always here for you as a refuge and resort.

Just move forward very gently one day at a time. I'll compare my painful stories with yours any day! I guarantee you, mine are worse! If I can rest as awareness continuously, so can you. Give the Teachings the benefit of the doubt, and it won't be long before they work their magic.

Q: How did you get this wisdom?

Candice: From nowhere and everywhere! You see, it's not in a location, and there is no one going to a location. Forever stainless

awareness has never been located anywhere, and we don't have to travel somewhere to get it. We're in California right now, but let's say that we went to somebody on the street and asked them to tell us where California is, and they said, "Sure, just travel 26,000 miles that way, and you'll end up in California." Well, it would be best not to follow that advice. Or we might meet someone who says, "Well, if you go sit on that rock for four years and twist your body into certain postures, then you might be able to get to California," but of course we wouldn't want to do that either. So, then, if we're fortunate, we might meet someone else. "Can you tell me how to get to California?" and they would say, "Hey, you're already in California!" That's the person we want to meet!

Beyond Cause and Effect

Chapter Twenty-Four

"Our true being is timeless, uncaused, and uncreated. In actuality, the fundamental condition of everyone has never been limited by time and space or cause and effect. This is simply the way it is. Everything, no matter what it is, is a perfect expression of love, wisdom, and energy that is beyond any concept or reference point."

Awareness is that by which everything is known. We wouldn't even be aware of our own being without awareness. Our own awareness is our direct connection to the ground of being, and is completely inseparable from it; it is inherently free, already present, and fully attained. Trying to attain it is like trying to attain the color of your eyes. You already have it! All you need to do is relax, and see that the color of your eyes is already there.

Similarly, trying to employ methods to reach the ground of being is like polishing wood hoping to obtain a diamond; one simply doesn't lead to the other! More to the point, when the diamond is already present as our own true nature, what is the use of polishing wood? When we attempt to follow causes in order to get to the uncaused, we often get lost in fruitless and unnecessary effort.

From the moment we're born we are told that we are flawed and that we need to be fixed. We're told that we live in space and time and that everything has a cause and every cause has an effect, and that life is about effort and achievement. Taking these concepts to be real, we then attempt to try to fix ourselves so we will not be flawed. Yet, when we start trying to fix ourselves by using a variety of methods, all we end up doing is piling points of view on top of points of view and rearranging our symptoms of imperfection. With each attempt at self-

repair we actually move a step away from the perfection that is here and now.

Thinking we are making progress, we're really just running on a hamster wheel in pursuit of an imagined goal that will always remain out of reach. Adding viewpoints to other viewpoints will never lead to that which has no point from which to view. Our true being is already perfect, does not need to be fixed, and is untouched by any appearance.

Many of the human belief systems that have to do with a personal identity are completely intertwined with the ideas of time and space and cause and effect. However, what we really are is beyond time and space, and untouched by cause and effect. Our true being is timeless, uncaused, and uncreated. In actuality, the fundamental condition of everyone has never been limited by time and space or cause and effect. This is simply the way it is. Everything, no matter what it is, is a perfect expression of love, wisdom, and energy that is beyond any concept or reference point.

The only possible way to realize this truth is to do nothing—because that which is, is already present and need not be acquired anew. Unless we know that our personal identity exists only as an expression of primordially pure awareness, doesn't have an independent nature, and doesn't need to be altered, we will remain frustrated and confused.

Awareness is already accomplished, and to rest repeatedly for short moments many times until it becomes automatic is absolutely all that is required. In this way, as we gently maintain awareness in the face of our various thoughts, emotions, and experiences, awareness is gradually revealed to be the one reality. We then evolve beyond primitive thinking that is bound by time and space and cause and

effect into an altogether new way of seeing. We're not really evolving into something new; we're just opening up into our true nature: the pristine awareness by which everything is known.

Discover that in yourself which is timeless, unborn, and uncaused. This isn't found through thinking, but by simply resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times until it becomes automatic.

The true nature of our being is already super-complete in itself and is an expression of superb helpfulness and benefit. This benefit is naturally present, and through rest we can gradually gain more familiarity with it. In this way our inherent power to be of benefit to ourselves and others naturally becomes manifest in our lives.

By not being distracted by fixed ideas like cause and effect or time and space and simply resting as awareness, we gradually go beyond the limitations of descriptive frameworks. We go beyond words and concepts and the need to think about everything; we gradually find ourselves freed from the tendency to cling to points of view and to proliferate them endlessly. It's much easier to see everything as inseparable from awareness than to cling to any kind of conceptual framework like time and space or cause and effect. These concepts become less necessary as we become more confident in awareness.

As each thought appears, we simply rest as awareness that is completely free from thought, and in this way we find that the thought and awareness are one. No-thought and thought are not two; this is what nondual means. They are completely inseparable. The basis of every thought is always completely at ease. If we are only familiar with the dynamic expression of thought, then we don't know anything about its fundamental condition, which is the awareness that is always

completely at ease, completely at rest, and has never been made into anything.

Let's consider for a moment the concept of "space," which usually refers to the expanse of the three-dimensional field of everyday life. We all have some understanding of that concept, but we can also use the term in a different way to point to something that is completely beyond the conventional model. The term "basic space" points to an unspeakable pure presence that is everywhere but doesn't have a residence or location. It can also be called "meta-space," the prefix "meta-" meaning "beyond." It includes three-dimensional space but is not limited to it. Meta-space includes all of time but is itself completely beyond time. Similarly, meta-space is beyond causality, yet includes cause and effect. There is no way to pin it down through ideas or theories, because it is itself the origin and basis of all ideas and theories, and yet it remains untouched by any movement of mind.

We cannot say that one part of that space is the cause that led to the effect of another part of that space. It is an indivisible seamless expanse of awareness that includes all and transcends all; absolutely nothing is excluded. Being the source and substance of all phenomena, it has complete control over all phenomena. What is entirely uncaused has no causes within it. It has never been made into forms or thoughts, or into anything else for that matter! The only way to get familiar with the natural ease of this basic space is to simply allow it to *be* by the power of maintaining awareness. We relax the mind completely, for short moments repeated many times, until that relaxation becomes automatic.

If we examine with elementary discernment any of the "cause and effect programs" that are supposed to lead us to the fundamental nature of our being, we see that very seldom do people realize the

fundamental condition through such methods and programs. It is very important to understand this, because most of us have been accustomed to employing methods and practices in the hope that they will lead to an ultimate destination. Timeless freedom is not a destination; it is here now. No method or practice can attain what is already present.

Most people tend to create a cause and effect relationship between everything that occurs: we have a thought, then we have an emotion, then we have an experience, and we think they are a direct cause and effect chain. Using that same kind of reasoning, we say, "Wow, I've got the solution to my problems. If I just do this and that, things will be better. If I do such and such a practice, I'll gain true happiness!" When we consider ourselves to be cause-based human beings located within time and space, we are denying our true identity and obscuring our inherent happiness.

We attribute our unhappiness to various causes and effects; we blame people and events or ourselves. Attributing everything to causes leads to confusion, suffering, and judging of ourselves and others. When we attribute every thought and emotion to a cause, we're actually taking our own power, which is limitless, and giving it away to an imaginary cause, saying that the cause is something in and of itself which has the power to affect us. The truth is that what we really are can never be affected by anything.

To live a life based on attributing individual causes to everything is really very primitive, and it doesn't give us any real ease of being. We are choosing to be a victim of our points of view, and as long as we do that, we'll continue to suffer. That's what's most important to understand about this way of thinking: it never gives us any real ease or relief. Why? Because it isn't based on the true nature of

phenomena. The fundamental condition can never be hurt by anything; it is the sole cause and the sole effect of all appearances and yet remains unaffected by any appearance. Awareness is inseparable from the clear light of wisdom, which is completely beyond thinking.

What does it mean that awareness is beyond thinking? It means that it doesn't have to use words or concepts to arrive at conclusions about anything. Awareness is the flawless knower, the clear light of wisdom that effortlessly knows everything about everything. It knows every appearance as it is, which means it completely understands its description, but it knows that description to be lacking an independent nature. Simply put, it knows the essence of all things to be itself. When we choose to rest as awareness and to allow the immediate relief of complete mental relaxation to be present in each identical moment, then we realize wisdom, which is beyond discriminative thinking. Then, if we ever use discriminative thinking at all, it's seen only as a practical tool rather than as an end in itself. We become so confident in this wisdom that eventually we won't feel compelled to rely on thinking. Instead we rely on the profound insights and ensuing skillful activities that are implicit in genuine wisdom.

In the same way that we can find no satisfaction in the images of a mirage or hologram, we can find no satisfaction in the various phenomena of the world without understanding their underlying essence. If we try to continually find satisfaction or fulfillment in something that doesn't have an independent nature, then we will always feel frustrated and confused.

How can we get beyond our enslavement to these long-held tendencies? When we acknowledge the awareness that is at the basis of every thought, emotion, and experience, and get familiar with that self-awareness by which we know we are, we discover that we're

already completely free and have never been enslaved by anything. We then find that we don't need to use conventional beliefs to describe the world or ourselves, because conventional beliefs simply don't apply when we have confidence in awareness. All thoughts, emotions, and experiences are the dynamic energy of pure awareness and nothing else. What further description could be needed? They cannot be separated out from reality and accurately described, for they have no independent nature. They have a label, but that label refers back to something that cannot be found—and that label too is nothing but awareness.

The whole idea we have about needing to decide whether things are good or bad in order to establish moral and ethical order within ourselves as individuals is just a belief system—and a profoundly limiting one at that. First of all, this belief system says that we exist as something in and of ourselves, separated from everything else by a personal identity. It also says that all things exist in and of themselves, separate from each other and from the ground of being, and are held within an overall system of time and space and cause and effect. Most of us live our entire lives trusting in this belief system—and being limited by it. Due to this, it is very hard for us to cheer up!

Just as in stainless sky there is no flaw anywhere, our own awareness is flawless and forever pure and free. It is the source and essence of all phenomena, and nothing can be said to exist separate from it—including cause and effect and time and space. When we only know descriptive frameworks, and that's all we know, then we're living on the surface of life, unaware of the underlying unity that pervades all diversity. The flawless knower that is beyond causation knows everything about cause and effect and time and space, and knows

itself to be the sole source of all appearances. This is the vantage that is all-pervasive, that understands everything, and that is completely beyond all the descriptions of causes and their results.

We are the all-encompassing vast expanse of awareness that includes and transcends all points of view. It's as simple as that. All points of view are contained therein, and whatever they may be, they are all originally pure, in that they are all only awareness. No matter what we call an appearance—positive or negative, good or bad, beneficial or harmful, cause and effect, time and space—it is really just awareness. In that balanced view lies complete freedom.

Q: I have periods of really intense sadness and depression, and I can see very clearly that the causes of this sadness come from the neglect, abuse, and mistreatment I experienced in my past. But you seem to be saying that those things have no power to affect me. How could that be?

Candice: I totally understand your question and want to explain this in a way that will be helpful to you. Let's say that this sadness comes up, it washes over you, and you get completely lost in it. You feel, "I'm sad again." There is "I," and then there is "I'm sad," and then there is "again." First there is the idea of a personal identity, and then the idea that the personal identity has a certain appearance within it, namely the sadness, then with "again" you're hauling in all the past points of view and saying, "I'm sad because such and such happened in the past, and the sadness comes again and again because of those causes."

What you're doing is describing and labeling what is appearing. Rather than going that route, you could look at the point of view of sadness and say, "This only has as much reality as I give it." When the

thought of sadness is indulged, it means that it's accepted as having an independent nature, and then it's elaborated upon. In your elaboration you go into all the stories about your sadness and where it came from and what it means.

But instead, if you just rest as awareness which is unaffected by any story, and allow the ease of being to be apparent, then you show yourself in that moment that you have mastery over the appearance of sadness. You see that the nature of the sadness is actually easeful awareness. The sadness and awareness are not two. Moreover, *any* thought or emotion can be mastered by awareness in this way. This means complete freedom in the immediacy of all experience, no matter what the experience is. You thought that sadness was controlled by the laws of cause and effect and that you were at the mercy of those laws, but that which is completely beyond causality is sitting right there in your chair! We have to know that there is more to us than what we have taken ourselves to be according to conventional ideas.

To set ourselves free, we've got to keep it very simple, and we can do that with two straightforward terms: "the all-encompassing pure view of awareness" and "points of view." If we take the individual points of view to exist in their own right, and define and label them, then it seems there are a whole bunch of things that have to be dealt with. First you have a person, and then that person has to figure out how they feel, and then they'll have to look back at their lives and dredge up all their experiences to figure out why they feel what they feel, and then start looking at all the other people, mommy and daddy, and figure out what they did wrong. What a mess!

It is much easier to just relax, and it's more effective too. In rest, awareness and points of view come together for us, as they have

always been together. Points of view are inseparable from awareness and are made only of that primordially pure nondual expanse. If we rest imperturbably for short moments repeated many times, it's guaranteed that no appearance can pose a threat or be an obstacle to maintaining awareness. We find that awareness is self-maintained. When you just relax in perceptual openness, who you take yourself to be loosens up. Instead of taking yourself to be only this finite body or a person with a certain name, the spaciousness of your being becomes much more obvious. Your identity isn't defined so much anymore by the person who's sitting here; your identity is no longer limited by somebody who's born or who will die.

Now, some people don't like it when I talk about perceptual openness, or the ease of being, or appearances as being originally pure, wholly positive, and beneficial. It really annoys them! They don't like to hear it, because it brings up feelings of being impure, bad, or negative, and brings into doubt all their judgments about themselves and others. It isn't so much that they necessarily dislike the terms I'm using, but the words stir up within them emotions and intense resistance. They feel, "Oh no way—I'm not pure, I'm not beneficial; I'm not wise! I couldn't possibly be happy in life, considering my past!" I call this the "Big No."

When I use the words "pure," "pure space," or the "wholly positive ground of being," what I'm referring to is the infinitely expansive ground of being that is stainless, flawless, and has never been made into anything other than what it is. Even though there may be all kinds of labels that describe all kinds of things, all that is, is originally pure and flawless. We realize this through resting imperturbably in the face of all appearances.

Q: I want to ask a question about cause and effect. I drank some bad water the other day that upset my stomach, so I took a particular medicine, and that helped sort out the problem. In theory cause and effect isn't real, but in real life it has meaning.

Candice: Here is what is going on. We get so accustomed to dualistic thinking and sorting everything out into opposite terms that when we hear something like what I have been saying, we say, "It is either cause and effect, or it is beyond causality—one of the two." What I am saying though is that "causation" and "being beyond causality" are *not two*. The realm of causation appears *within* that which is beyond causality and is truly made only of that, and is inseparable from that. It is only in resting as awareness that this can be understood and realized. By the single power of resting as awareness for short moments, repeated many times, its pure presence will become obvious as pervasive of all experience.

You seem to be making some assumptions about your situation that you might want to re-examine. You think the bad water was the cause of your stomachache, and the stomachache was the cause of your taking the medicine, and taking the medicine was the cause of your feeling better. You see it all as a direct cause and effect chain, but there are other ways of seeing the situation which might be equally valid, or perhaps more valid.

One way of seeing things is that all events are actually uncaused, unrelated appearances that arise and pass away unpredictably as the dynamic energy of awareness. Since all events in time and space are merely ephemeral points of view within awareness, they are dream-like, similar to an appearance within a mirage or a hologram. To assume that one event causes another is to give events more reality than they actually have.

Can a dreamlike image have the power to cause anything? Can a wave in a mirage be said to be the cause of another wave? Can it even be said to exist? When we realize the mirage-like nature of all phenomena, we no longer imbue events with the power to create other events; we simply rest in the awareness which is the sole reality underlying all appearances, knowing that primordial basic space to be the only true power, the only true cause, and the only true existence.

Everything that appears, including the appearance of cause and effect, is a circumstantial wisdom appearance of timeless awareness. When we rest as awareness, we find that we have complete freedom in the direct encounter with all points of view. The more powerful that becomes in us, the more we have complete mastery over mental, emotional, and physical phenomena.

Why not keep resting as awareness and see what happens? In resting *as* that illness, you will discover that the experience of illness can be of tremendous benefit to you, and to all beings. You might find it to be an open doorway into your limitless, timeless nature. But you can never know that if you continue to look only at causes and effects and conditions. When you discover that illness and pain can never affect who you truly are, then any condition of the body and mind will be an invitation to rest, and an entrance into deeper abidance in the pure awareness that is your true nature.

By the power of confidence in awareness, you find within yourself the tremendous energy of love and wisdom. This is the supreme healer. By maintaining awareness, you will have the profound insight to know how to respond to mental and physical points of view. Moreover, you will no longer be bound to limited ways of thinking about them.

The Compassionate Powers of Great Benefit

Chapter Twenty-Five

"In awareness, all the beautiful dreams we dream become possible: people can have a good standard of living, and the world can become a place where human beings are of profound benefit to each other and to their habitat."

When we have complete ease and perceptual openness in all our experiences—especially the negative ones—then we find a superb helpfulness already present within us, which like the sun, is always shining. There's a natural ease of being in which no one is a stranger. Compassion never needs to be cultivated or developed—it is always naturally present in awareness. In fact, compassion is equal to awareness and can only be found in awareness. The compassion that can be cultivated and developed is lifeless compared to the unstoppable compassion that shows no bias. True compassion is totally innocent and totally free. We can become acquainted with this compassion only by seeing that awareness has complete mastery over everything that appears in our thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Just as the lotus arises out of the mud but is completely unaffected by the mud, the beautiful flower of compassion appears out of our deepest, darkest emotions, thoughts, and experiences. How is this possible? When we remain in awareness without correcting the flow of thoughts, then—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly—we begin to see how these thoughts that have troubled us so much are free in their own place and are their own undoing. We don't have to think about these troubling viewpoints to make sense of them. Like a line drawn in water, they vanish in and of themselves; this is absolutely guaranteed. When we rest as these muddy places within,

we find something incredible about ourselves: a space of complete peace and freedom that is the fundamental condition of the “mud.”

We have caused so much suffering by constantly interrogating ourselves about all our points of view and interrogating others about their points of view. When we find the equanimous nature within ourselves, wherein everything that appears is equal, then we have compassion for ourselves. When we see this compassion in such a super-complete way, we see that this not only applies to us, it applies to everyone. We go through a dramatic shift where instead of our points of view being only about us, we start to think, “Wow, everyone has these problems. These intense emotions and deep, dark thoughts are there in others also. It isn’t just me. Since I’ve found healing for myself, maybe I can help others, too.”

This is the true birth of compassion. We see that the good, bad, beautiful, and ugly about ourselves are all equal, and then when we look at everyone else—they just start to look fantastic! No matter what they’re doing, we understand completely and understand how to help. If we need to act, we act spontaneously and skillfully. What’s more, there are no “buttons” in us to be pressed anymore. One person can say to us, “You’re the greatest person who ever lived on earth,” and another can say, “You’re a total creep,” and we are not moved either way, because we completely understand the total context. We know that what we really are is beyond either of these judgments. This is not passivity; it’s radical freedom that has not been tied up anywhere. It has no conventional constructs. From the perspective of that perfect freedom, conventional descriptive frameworks are no longer necessary.

We experience a tremendous depth of compassion that appears with the release of energy that comes from no longer believing that

thoughts and emotions have an independent nature. With the arising of the profound self-compassion that is the only true self-respect, we instantaneously have compassion for everyone else, because we know everyone else is in the same boat. No longer are we in this partisan position where we are saying to everyone else, "My points of view are the right points of view, and yours aren't!"

When we let go of all our fixed points of view, a tremendous amount of energy appears. This is the wisdom energy of superb helpfulness, and its intent is entirely beneficial. We are naturally compassionate, so once we begin resting, even if we've had a long habit of growling at people, it doesn't matter. The more we rest as awareness, the more the growl will just dissolve in and of itself without our having to do anything to make it happen! When we find that the fundamental ground of our own being is unalterable, flawless wisdom energy, then we can love completely without conditions. We love ourselves in an ultimate way, and we are able to love others in the same way.

Life is a precious human opportunity to benefit ourselves and others. This self-benefit and benefit of others is already present within us and is not something we get from somewhere else. Getting in touch with that is very straightforward and simple. When we rest repeatedly for short moments, many times, we get familiar with the self-benefit that really allows us to be of profound benefit to others. It's in that self-benefit that the love, wisdom, and energy arise that allow us to go completely beyond anything we ever thought we could do or contribute. No matter how accomplished we may be now, when we rest as awareness and get in touch with the self-benefit that is natural to us, a whole new way of seeing comes about—including seeing our own capacity to be of benefit in a new way.

We can know that we are resting in awareness by the display of benefit in our lives. The more familiar we become with awareness, the more beneficial activity will come about. It could be beneficial activity in terms of our own individual life or for the sake of the people or causes we care about. It is urgently important for each of us as individuals and for all of us together all over the world to tap into that natural resource of benefit. When we rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times, the insight and skillful means needed to take care of everything in life naturally come about. This includes the ability to truly love and be intimate without ever thinking about it—not just with a few people, but with everyone. There is just total and complete intimacy with no fear anywhere. From the very beginning, we are longing for this love that has no name, in which everything is of a unified and single nature. This is not a cut-off or passive state. It is the reality that is naturally present as the fundamental condition.

When we become familiar with the natural order of everything, we see that it is at ease, ordered, and beneficial in its own way, and that everything is already resolved. When we're at ease in our being, then we recognize that natural order. We know what it means to be human. We really are an enactment of nature, and when we rest completely in the ease of our being, then we're just acting as nature does. Resting our mind and body completely in all situations, we start to feel like we really fit in with the natural order of things. For every single one of us, no matter how hideous or how saintly our actions have been, the nature of our mind is to benefit ourselves and benefit others. Only the person who has learned this is truly able to be of benefit. Who we've been in the past is not what we should take ourselves to be now. We are not our history— we are timeless.

Everything is sweet and good, even the things that don't appear to be sweet and good! To recognize this is true bliss. True joy doesn't come from trying to get into a state of joy; rather, it arises from seeing the lack of separation between joy and sorrow—without trying to change anything. True bliss is the eradication of a mood-based life. Does that mean that there are no longer moods? No. It just means that there is no separation between bliss and whatever mood happens to be appearing. One moment we might have an incredibly ecstatic experience, and the next moment we may be experiencing great suffering, but we recognize that all appearances are inherently equal. Each experience, whether positive or negative, is like a shooting star in the vast expanse of space that leaves no trace. It appears from space and resolves in space.

Great benefit can never come from seeing appearances as unequal. Seeing appearances as unequal is a sub-optimal strategy for living. It is taking a system and reducing it to its lowest level of operation, which is only one of the ways we can choose to live. However, when we choose to rest as the basis of all appearances, then we are living optimally, and we are what we are meant to be. In this way we become truly intelligent—just as nature is. There is nothing to fix anywhere, and when we realize this, the self-benefit is enormous.

Then, we can just be with ourselves in a way that is totally free—free from the content of our thoughts and emotions. We don't need to change any of it or make it any different. Non-difference means nothing needs to be made different! That is real freedom. The sense of non-separation is so obvious that benefit to the whole is just naturally flowing, and we become a fount of that benefit for all.

Q: I'm interested in reaching my full potential in life, relationships, and in my ability to be successful in my work. I've read a lot of books about accessing one's inherent energy and power, and I would be interested in your take on that.

Candice: Inseparable from awareness is the sheer force and power of everything exactly as it is. If you are looking for power or force or whatever it might be called, it has never been anywhere else but in your own awareness. Power or force is completely relaxed. The greatest power you'll ever encounter is the power of the openness of your own awareness. All displays of whatever kind are projections of that alone. Awareness and its powers of benefit will continue to intensify once they are recognized.

It's only in awareness that we will find a wisdom that is unparalleled. How do we know it's unparalleled? Because there are things that people who are confident in awareness can do that nobody else can do. They can do great things that benefit many, many beings: feeding hungry people, providing health care, education and shelter, and, of course, introducing people to awareness, and helping them gain confidence in it. There are people who can heal the sick, move things without touching them, and manifest objects out of space. Most importantly, when one is confident in awareness, one has perfect mental stability at all times and is able to act skillfully and insightfully. Wherever people abide as this sublime nature of awareness, there are incredible powers present that are completely beyond causality.

There is a lot of interest in these powers especially in countries like India, where there have been people displaying such powers for generations. Wherever or however these powers may be displayed, know that they are completely beyond all the conceptual capacities of the mind to comprehend. The truth is that everyone has those powers

that I just mentioned, and many more that I didn't mention, but they remain dormant within us until the discovery of our own awareness. They're not in any individual—they're inherent in the self-perfected fundamental condition of everything. We as humankind need to get acquainted with these powers. Anyone who might want to scoff at these things is welcome to scoff. It will not affect the validity of what has been stated about these powers.

Q: I am very eager to help save the world from disaster, but I doubt my own ability to make a real difference. I also fear the insecurity that comes from living a life of service in which my own personal needs might not be directly provided for. Can you offer some advice in this?

Candice: Only through resting as awareness can we access the potency of pure wisdom, and in that potency the thoughts, emotions, and everything else are always related to the benefit of all. The solution to all problems is timelessly available within the fundamental nature of reality.

Regarding the problems for which we may be seeking solutions—within ourselves, our families, communities, and the world—the solutions are all within the potent, beneficial powers of timeless wisdom that are inseparable from our own awareness. When we simply rest as awareness repeatedly, then eventually we see the full evidence of awareness that is the spontaneous ground of everything that appears. When we rest naturally in that spontaneous ground, we increasingly know how to act in a very powerful way in every situation.

When we hear that nothing need be done about appearances, this does not suggest that we become a couch potato, or that we have a license to go pell-mell doing whatever we want to do, or that we

should fall into any form of inaction or passivity whatsoever. When we get in touch with what connects us to the super-intelligence of the natural order of everything, then we have immense power, force, and super-intelligence in our own lives. The practical application of this power is expressed in the world as skillful means and wisdom. When we are truly familiar with awareness, we have the skillful means to be superbly helpful, and that is accompanied by the wisdom of knowing what to do and how to act in all situations.

Here is a very simple proposition: by the power of the single practice of resting as awareness for short moments, many times, until it becomes automatic, anything we've ever thought about being or doing can come about. We will see a way of being more beneficial in all circumstances than we'd ever imagined possible. We will be able to discover the wisdom that is required to solve the tremendous problems facing our species and the tremendous problems caused by our species.

We can't deny that we have all kinds of problems. They need to be solved, and they can only be solved with the wisdom solution. In this way we can come together as a grassroots global community gaining confidence in awareness to solve our individual problems and the problems of the world. Getting into rarified states of altered consciousness has not solved the problems of the world. Only awareness, which is beyond time, space, and causality and which has no attachment to any convention, can see solutions to problems that have not yet been solved. Formerly unsolvable problems—like so many of the world's people not having clean, water and nourishing food to eat on a daily basis, environmental degradation, endless wars and conflicts between peoples, nuclear missiles pointed everywhere—all these are solvable. However, the thinking that created these problems

will not solve the problems. These problems will only be overcome by the power of awareness and its insights that cannot be found within conventional conceptual frameworks.

There is no one who doesn't want to be of benefit. Even someone like a gang member wants to be of benefit; it's just that a gang member's angle of vision may not be socially acceptable to most people. Everyone has this urge to freedom and to be of benefit; however, unless someone shows us how to really bring that into full being within ourselves, we won't know how to do it. If we're not shown how, or do not find it for ourselves, we'll spend our entire lives dreaming small dreams and settling for just a mere glimpse of our genius.

When we are interested only in our appearances and involved in a life of self-concern, then we are blind to the power of our own being. Trapped in our own personal identity, we become tense and frightened and start looking for ways to advance ourselves, substantialize ourselves, and prop ourselves up with our points of view. We might want to appear beneficial to others so that people will think well of us, but when we do this, we grossly limit our true identity. Our true identity has no need to attract notoriety. When we rest as awareness, we rest as the sovereign fundamental reality that knows no pride. In awareness, all the beautiful dreams we dream become possible: people can have a good standard of living, and the world can become a place where human beings are of profound benefit to each other and to their habitat.

Don't ever settle for some kind of image of yourself that is based on mental ideation, whereby you need to puff yourself up with points of view and then compete with other people and show how great your abilities are in order to feel like you are somebody. That's a waste of a

life. Even if you were to feel somewhat better some of the time by doing that, know that you can feel a lot better by simply gaining confidence in awareness! Beyond the personal identity is something that is incredibly immense and profound. I invite and encourage everyone to discover what that is, by the power of resting for short moments many times until it becomes spontaneous.

It's Up to You, and It's Up to Me!

Chapter Twenty-Six

"By the power of maintaining awareness, a strong compassion will emerge within us that has the capability and determination to bring about direct change. We will find the solutions for both personal and global problems by going beyond points of view such as "us and them.""

"It's Up to You and It's Up to Me!" is the title of a kind of theme song we have in the Great Freedom community. Every day when I was giving talks in Rishikesh, India in the early months of 2007, we would have a songfest as part of our meetings, and one of our lovely participants wrote this song and sang it to us a number of times. The chorus goes: "It's up to you and it's up to me; together there's nothing we can't be! It's up to me, and it's up to you; together there's nothing we can't do!"²

It truly is up to us to bring about the transformation we want to see in our world, and the demonstration of this will happen at the grassroots level. Where are the grassroots? They're right here in each one of us, and they're in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, and North America. They're everywhere you find people, including in prisons all over the world. They're wherever anyone is resting as awareness. The unifying nature of awareness is what unites all of us in a common bond, and it's up to us to bring about the global healing and unity that is possible and so much needed.

When we are resting as awareness, we're enabled to find solutions to our own personal concerns as well as solutions to the problems facing the world. We must be clear, though, that the only

² Words and music by Shantam Zohar

way we can tap into that resource of wisdom is to become deeply acquainted with it. To the extent that we become familiar with the wisdom inherent in awareness, we will be less ruled by the obsessive self-focus that has compelled us to put our attention into our own personal circumstances. As a result, we will see very profoundly that not only do we need to eat and be housed and clothed, *everyone* needs the same things.

As we know, many people on Earth *don't* have these basic things. Instead of this being a fact that we gloss over or feel powerless to deal with, we need to fully acknowledge these facts, and find the determination to do something about it. By the power of maintaining awareness, a strong compassion will emerge within us that has the capability and determination to bring about direct change. We will find the solutions for both personal and global problems by going beyond points of view such as "us and them."

The usual way of treating the mind is to chase down thoughts, emotions, and sensations, and then label them as positive, negative, or neutral. We try to accumulate more of the positive ones and get rid of the negative ones. Instead of bringing real benefit, this way of relating to our mind only creates greater tension and unease within us and with others, and can never provide long-lasting solutions for the problems we're facing.

No matter how advanced our science and technology may appear to be from the conventional point of view, their benefit remains limited at best if it's only being expressed within the boundaries of conventional thought, and not within the context of what will be of most benefit to all. In fact, unless science and technology are aligned with the wisdom of all-encompassing awareness, they will remain part of the problem. Only in growing confident in awareness as an

alternative to ordinary thinking are we going to be able to truly solve our problems, whether they are our own individual difficulties or those of the world.

We have to let go of all the conventional reference points, allow ourselves to discover awareness and be guided by its inherent power of wisdom that is beyond ordinary thinking. This really is the only hope we have. The good news is that the powers of great benefit that come from awareness are tremendously potent, and are fully capable of bringing about the changes required for the human race to not only survive but thrive. These are changes the conventional mind cannot even imagine.

The crisis facing humanity today is not just one of external problems such as poverty, pollution, and the threat of nuclear war; the root of this crisis is in the mind. The conflict and environmental degradation we see manifesting all around the world reflect the way we relate to our own thoughts and emotions. Chronic anger, violence, despair, depression, and drug and alcohol addiction are pervasive in the modern world. We have great conflict within ourselves as individuals, and as a result we also have conflicts in our families, our communities, and in the world as a whole.

Whatever goes on within individuals will also be played out on a global scale among nations. The constant battle waged in the mind through the attempt to correct and control our thoughts and emotions has never brought us inner peace. It is really foolhardy to keep doing the same things over and over again, when we can see the detrimental or half-baked results those approaches have brought. The best way to be freed from this destructive cycle is to become familiar with awareness by resting mind and body for short moments repeated many times until it becomes automatic; this is something each one of

us can do. When we simply get familiar with our own awareness, we find solutions that are entirely beyond what we have devised until now. As more and more people around the world learn to enjoy stable awareness, we will be empowered to bring about transformations that are truly beneficial for the planet and its inhabitants.

Our natural disposition as human beings is mutual enrichment, and we come to know we are truly capable of that in the certainty of awareness. If we want to better ourselves as a human species, we need to look to where the greatest power resides. Awareness is the source of powerful wisdom and is limitless by nature. When we rely upon stable awareness again and again, rather than upon ordinary thinking, it will become perfectly clear what needs to be done to provide lasting benefit to the world. And we will be empowered with the skill and determination to do what needs to be done.

The question sometimes comes up, “How can I rest as awareness when there is so much suffering in the world? If I just rest, isn’t that like checking out and ignoring the big problems facing humankind?” The answer is, no; gaining confidence in awareness is the *best* solution to the problems facing humankind. When we maintain awareness, we begin to know ourselves as an integral part of the natural order, rather than as being something apart from it. By the power of awareness, we increasingly settle into the ease of our natural being, and the result is that the tremendous power of timeless awareness can flow in us unobstructedly.

Nature is at ease with whatever is occurring, and this is how we are meant to be as well. Nature is at ease with all extremes. Whether the ocean is rough and tumultuous, or still and calm, it is content with itself as it is. It isn’t trying to fiddle around with the big waves to make them smaller, or trying to make the calm areas rise up into waves. It

is simply resting as its own nature, and letting the waves be as they are.

This is how we are meant to relate to our thoughts and emotions. Rather than trying to control each wave of thought and emotion as it appears, we simply rest as the vast ocean of awareness, seeing each wave as a perfect expression of that awareness. In this way we live in harmony and peace with whatever appears in our mind from moment to moment, identified only with the all-encompassing awareness that is our true nature.

We are meant to be completely relaxed. Look at the trees, flowers, birds, and everything else. It's all at rest, all effortlessly in harmony with nature no matter the conditions. The wind may be raging, but its essence is total rest. There isn't any resistance; everything is just the way it is—and because there's no resistance, the great power and ease of awareness is effortlessly present.

Through resting as awareness for short moments repeated many times, we can discover the same power. If we need to move forcefully and powerfully at a given time, the best way to do that is to rest and allow the wisdom that emerges from awareness to both empower us to act and show us exactly how to act. As we gain confidence in awareness, our actions will be ever more clearly guided by nature's intelligence.

Without the decisive experience of our awareness, all of this will remain only an intellectual understanding. But when we experience the presence of awareness again and again, our vision will become very clear. When we repeatedly rest as awareness, we enter into and rely on its extraordinary wisdom that has the power to solve problems such as global warming, famine, lack of clean water and proper health care.

Only through the power of awareness can lasting solutions for grave problems such as these be found.

By being at ease in awareness with everything that goes on within us, we discover wisdom. As we do so, we experience firsthand the amazing benefit of wisdom. Please don't just accept what I'm saying; I'm inviting you to test these things for yourself, like a scientist who has a hypothesis and then tests it to see the result. Rest as awareness for short moments repeated many times until it becomes spontaneous, and then see what comes about as a result.

Once our awareness is sufficiently well-established, there isn't constant distraction by points of view. It is then that the benefit of naturally occurring wisdom becomes very obvious. The first level of benefit comes to us as individuals. It is self-benefit. We attain equanimity of mind and unshakeable happiness and peace within ourselves. That's not a small thing! Once we've benefited ourselves in that most essential way, there will be no stopping the inexorable flow of compassionate feeling and action that arises. This is the dignity, confidence, and elegance of service inspired by profound wisdom and charged with the limitless energy of awareness. From awareness beyond learning and thinking, solutions arise that could never have been arrived at through ordinary thinking.

I want to make a very important point regarding coming to know our true identity as awareness. If we decide that we do want to discover our true identity through resting as awareness, then we need to become *totally committed* to resting. In Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" he writes, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." If we retain our belief that thoughts and emotions have the power to rule us, and we only rely on awareness part of the time, then that will be

the road traveled all too often—the road of partial commitment and half measures, and it doesn't lead to real mental stability and wisdom.

But if we are truly committed to growing confident in awareness for the benefit of all, then we will take "the road less traveled." We'll choose the road of relying on stable awareness no matter what our thoughts, emotions, or experiences may be. We'll say to ourselves, "I will never give up, no matter how long I live. I will rely on awareness until I have the vantage of its wise intelligence in all my activities. I will persevere no matter what happens until awareness becomes completely spontaneous and I no longer need to try to maintain awareness. For the sake of everyone and myself, I will continue without fail. I will draw on the wisdom resources of stable awareness to support my decisions until it becomes obvious at all times." These are the two choices: a partial commitment, or a complete commitment, which guarantees the desired result. The commitment must be 100%, because only then can wisdom come fully alive.

The truth is we can only exercise our commitment one moment at a time. Our decision to rely on awareness must be continually reaffirmed by the practice of relying on awareness, moment by moment. We can say, "I am committed forever," but in living that commitment, it must be continually reaffirmed by choosing to rest one thought at a time, one emotion at a time, and one experience at a time whenever we remember to do so. In this simply way, brief moments of awareness gradually gain momentum and become automatic.

Q: How does resting as awareness need to be understood in terms of developing the leaders of the future?

Candice: In the same way that resting as awareness brings us great insights, awareness can also create leaders of great wisdom. Leaders need to be people who are able to manifest extraordinary mental stability, compassion, profound insight and skillful activities in all situations, and these attributes should be the primary criteria for any national leader. By the power of awareness, leaders at every level of human culture can share in this reservoir of attributes.

In awareness, we have a balanced view. We are aware not only of what we are thinking and feeling, but also what other people are thinking and feeling. If we're all wrapped up in our own emotions, thoughts, and desires, we won't have the openness and spaciousness to understand what other people are thinking and feeling, or to see with clarity how our actions will affect others. Without that instinctive connection with the minds of everyone around the globe, it's very difficult for a leader to make decisions that truly benefit everyone.

If we take ourselves to be an individual who is an accumulation of thoughts, emotions, experiences, achievements, and failures, then we'll spend our whole life trying to further that identity. We'll cling to certain points of view and reject other viewpoints, and then compete with everyone around us, displaying our abilities in order to prove that our points of view are right. We will be living under the assumption, "My points of view are right and yours are wrong. And because my points of view are right, I am somebody special, and because I'm special, my decisions are right, no matter what you say!" We may develop contrived listening skills in order to gain the favor of others in furthering our own agenda. True leadership can never come from that way of thinking and living. Only a continuation of these aggressive forms of relating will come from that way of thinking, and there is plenty of it on display throughout human culture.

However, when we rest as awareness, we find within ourselves the wisdom that has no pride or aggression. Increasingly, there is a completely balanced view of everything that occurs. With that balanced view, we have the spontaneous ability to act in a way that is beneficial to everyone. Not only that, we can laugh a lot more!

Q: You have mentioned a number of problems the world is facing. Can you speak about the problems economically wealthy countries like America have?

Candice: All countries have problems, even places like America where there's a lot of food to eat. In fact, that's one of our problems—we have so much food that an increasing percentage of our population is becoming obese! America as a whole enjoys a level of economic wealth and advantage that is almost unimaginable for people in some parts of the world. Yet, America is quite troubled in its own way. This country has all the material things, but in some cases very little wisdom about what we really are as human beings. There is so much distraction by the desire for material possessions—and the enjoyment of the personal pleasure and comfort derived from them—that there can be a tendency to become enraptured with this way of life rather than looking to see how resources can be distributed throughout humankind.

We who enjoy such incredible privilege are living an illusion if we think that this privilege could never be taken from us. I have so many friends around the world who have suffered from tremendous political upheavals and who have had to flee their own countries and seek refuge elsewhere, usually under very difficult circumstances. I really want to emphasize how quickly that can come about for any of us. We should never feel that we are safe from unexpected tumultuous

events, because anything can happen. What is happening to people in conflict torn countries can also happen to those of us who are presently living in great security and comfort.

The only way to be prepared for any event is to gain confidence in awareness and find that within ourselves which is unaffected by any circumstance. In finding peace within ourselves, we can open our hearts to helping others find peace, too.

Now, the truth is that those who want to rely on awareness can do that anywhere. People living in the US are as fully imbued with awareness as anyone else in the world. And although the US has its problems, there is a wonderful openness to new ideas that has always made the United States a fertile ground for new approaches to living.

Q: If everything is a perfect expression of awareness, then where is the need to save the world or solve its problems?

Candice: Everything *is* a perfect expression of awareness, including the world and all the suffering in the world. Another way to say this is that everything is *equally* an expression of nature's intelligence. Whether solutions are found for all the problems our species is facing, or whether the world is saved or not, in the final analysis, it is not going to affect the timeless intelligence at the basis of everything. However, when we have confidence in awareness, intense compassion naturally arises within us for all who suffer, along with a firm commitment to do whatever we can to bring genuine relief.

To say, "Everything is awareness, therefore the world does not exist, so I don't need to do anything to help the suffering," is a nihilistic view. Such extreme ways of thinking actually perpetuate the suffering in the world, making us blind to the pain around us and the practical ways we can help others.

Awareness is the mainstay and support both of our individual well-being and our well-being as a species. When we gain familiarity with awareness, there is a tremendous amount of energy that is generated from letting go of all the fixed reference points of ordinary thinking. We find the energy of superb helpfulness and compassion. These are an inherent aspect of our own awareness, an actual feeling of warmth and goodwill within us. We can really know if we are relying on awareness because kindness and compassion will naturally well up within us and begin flowing out towards everyone. Moreover, this will be obvious to us and to others.

Wisdom is the understanding that everything is fundamentally equal by nature. We are either lost in the world of points of view and cause and effect, or we recognize all appearances as wisdom appearances. When we have found that equal vision, perfect wisdom and perfect understanding will prevail in every situation. It becomes impossible to act in any way that is not beneficial. No matter what attributions of good and bad, right and wrong we've had before, they are all gone beyond in wisdom. This super-complete wisdom that is mutually enriching and interpenetrating is so much needed today. Through the natural ease of completely open awareness, one knows what to do and how to act in a simple, beneficial way.

At this point in history, it should be obvious that all of our philosophies about right and wrong, sin and virtue have not enabled us to solve either our individual problems or our problems as a species. In fact, if we consider the fact that almost all wars have been fought on the basis of such ideas, we might conclude that those ideas are some of humankind's greatest problems! It's only the wisdom that's beyond all science and philosophy that can bring lasting solutions to the huge problems the planet and its inhabitants are facing.

Q: But surely all political action isn't futile. Haven't there been many people who brought about great change in the world through their actions?

Candice: There's no denying that good things have come about from people's political efforts. But no matter how much good has come about in that way, infinitely *more* good can come about from the wisdom of awareness. Only when people get familiar with the pristine wisdom at the basis of all appearances will we truly be able to resolve the monumental problems we face in the modern age. From awareness we will have a much clearer and more balanced view than we could ever have from any extreme political position. There is something in true wisdom that goes far beyond all political or philosophical ideals, no matter how amazing those ideals may seem to be.

When I was a young woman, I was very much involved in political issues, and I saw all kinds of extremism on all sides of the political spectrum. I was firmly committed to many of the liberal ideas of the day, but I saw so much infighting, competition, and fanaticism within the organizations with which I was involved that I very quickly became disillusioned with political activism. We were looking for world peace, love, and the end of war, but what we actually ended up with was factionalism and watered down idealism due to all the fighting and disagreements between people! Most often, the most powerful faction would assert its power; in other words, the group that could muscle its way through to victory via power-driven actions would win.

I could see that this kind of decision-making was inadequate for bringing about world peace. I thought to myself, "What's going on here? Most of these people, including me, are not peaceful within

themselves! How can a group of such people bring about a peaceful world?" It didn't seem to matter which side we were on. Our lack of inner peace, whether it was due to anger, pride, fear, desire, depression, or ignorance, would eventually lay ruin to even the most beautifully peaceful ideals. Protesting for peace without inner peace can never bring about world peace.

So what to do? I finally came to a point where I saw that all of the ideologies I'd come up with had led absolutely nowhere. They didn't show me how to solve my personal problems, they didn't show anyone how to work powerfully together in an organization, and they weren't really changing anything worldwide. Holding to those ideologies was just another way of getting lost in extremes.

Thankfully, at a very young age, I realized that all of us have to first come to terms with the struggle for peace *within ourselves*. That's where the primary struggle has to be resolved; only then can we succeed in creating organizations that are truly loving, peaceful, and beneficial. If we don't come to terms with ourselves as individuals, and make peace within ourselves, then there's no way we can make peace with one another or in the world.

Political extremism has only resulted in greater conflicts among people. Revolutions based on power struggles and hatred only create bloodshed and a new kind of bondage. Institutions or political movements that are based on extremism are places filled with pain and chaos. They just replicate what is going on inside us. We copy our inner suffering and paste it into an organization! Can such an organization bring peace to the world?

I am firmly convinced that humankind *does* have the capacity to form wisdom-filled organizations, but they can't be structured in the hierarchical and confrontational way in which many organizations are

structured today. The ideal organization is one of participatory democracy, where leaders see their roles as ones of encouragement and inspiration that will bring out the strengths and talents of everyone in the organization. In this kind of organization, there is a great deal of dignity, confidence, and mutual support as people share their gifts with one another toward reaching a common goal.

When people rely on awareness, they are empowered to create institutions and organizations that are truly happy, enjoyable and supportive places to be. To do that in an optimal fashion, we must rely on awareness rather than ordinary thinking. Stable awareness brings about a new kind of thinking that is rich with effectiveness.

Whenever we are looking for peace anywhere else, we must first look to find it within ourselves. By the power of awareness, humankind can find the inner and outer peace that we've been looking for.

In Great Freedom, we have created a worldwide organization based on our Principles of Unity and Service. For example, one of our Principles is that everyone is welcome to participate in the Great Freedom movement, and that no one can ever be excluded for any reason. It's an organization built on complete openness and inclusivity.

There is something about each one of us that is completely at peace, and if we become familiar with that equanimity, then so many of the things to which we have aspired become possible. When we know ourselves to be naturally resourceful, dignified, and confident, then our families, communities, institutions and world can become that way too. This is truly something to aspire to and work towards.

It's up to us.

Great Freedom Resources

There are many resources available for anyone who is interested in knowing more about the Great Freedom Teaching. The main source for this information is the Great Freedom website, www.greatfreedom.org. Posted here are numerous public talks, videos, and texts, including *One Simple Change Makes Life Easy*, by the Great Freedom founder, Candice O'Denver. While contributions are gratefully accepted, all media is available free of charge. Talks can be easily downloaded in MP3 format to a computer or MP3 player; they range in length from a few minutes to an hour or more, and are of great assistance to anyone interested in gaining confidence in awareness.

Also listed on the website is a schedule of Great Freedom Teachings around the world. Venues range from face-to-face Teachings and public Open Meetings, to Teachings and Meetings offered via free teleconference bridge.

For many, the primary introduction to resting as awareness comes from listening to the free downloads described above. Further support for resting as awareness is offered through Great Freedom's Four Comforts and three series of written teachings: *Everyday Awareness: Twelve Inquiries*, *The Power of Wisdom*, and *The Principles of Unity and Service*.

An Introductory Teaching, in which participants receive direct instruction in the practice of short moments of awareness, repeated many times is the prerequisite for participation in *Everyday Awareness: Twelve Inquiries*, the preliminary Teaching of Great Freedom. The *Twelve Inquiries* introduce participants to the fundamental nature of mind, awareness, and points of view; they

provide pivotal instructions that evoke a direct and decisive experience of awareness (an outline of the Twelve Inquiries Teaching is available on the website.)

The Power of Wisdom Series fully supports the fruition of the wisdom powers of great benefit: complete emotional and mental stability, profound insight, unstoppable compassion, and skillful activity in every moment.

For those committed to sharing the vision of Great Freedom—awareness for all—the Twelve Principles of Unity and Twelve Principles of Service are provided, along with direct guidance from a certified Great Freedom teacher. These show us how to work together as an organization and as a global human family, providing structures that ensure peace, harmony, and respect in all circumstances.

For more information concerning any of these teachings, please visit our website.

The Four Comforts are the context for all Great Freedom offerings. This support is available to participants through: 1) resting as awareness, 2) the teaching, 3) the teacher, and 4) the community. Each of the teachers in Great Freedom is committed to providing all the necessary support to any person committed to resting as awareness through the Great Freedom Teaching. Any request for support from a participant will be replied to within twenty-four hours.

For participants who wish to contribute to the Great Freedom Teaching, donations are gratefully accepted. Regardless of ability to contribute, all are welcome.



www.greatfreedom.org