

You Can Be Happy, No Joke



by

Steve Martin

(AKA Stephen Hawley Martin)

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DEDICATION

For Hans, Hannah Grace, & Hawley

“I have noticed that most people in this world are about as happy as they have made up their minds to be.”

A quotation of uncertain origin often attributed to Abraham Lincoln

This Book Is For You and Everyone You Know

Ever given thought to the famous question asked by Hamlet, “To be or not to be?” Many have and many of those who did decided they did not want to be—more than 40,000 in the United States last year. On top of that, the rate of suicide is climbing—reason enough to write this book, which I believe can be the antidote to this disease. Based on almost forty years of study and hundreds of interviews with experts and researchers in a variety of fields, this little volume will explain why suicide offers a false promise to those who wish to escape the dire straits of life. It then spells out realities that can inform or enhance an individual’s personal philosophy—something I think each person needs in order to have a life worth living—and then it goes on to suggest actions based on those realities that can lead to a life one will not want to end.

First, let me make it clear that this is not a book about religion. It is based firmly on research by highly-credible scientists. Among the many are J. B.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Rhine, Ph.D. (1885-1980) of Duke University, Ian Stevenson, M.D. (1918-2007), of the University of Virginia, Rupert Sheldrake, a biochemist and graduate of the University of Cambridge, Raymond Moody, M.D. & Ph.D., Julie Beischel, Ph.D., Stephen Braude, Ph.D., Louise Ireland-Frey, M.D., (1912-2014), Nobel Prize winner Niels Bohr (1885-1962), and Fellow of the Royal Society Ernest Lester Smith (1904-1992). Their findings viewed in the aggregate overwhelmingly indicate something truly profound, so profound indeed that it can change how billions of people on earth today view life—that the ground of being of the reality we inhabit is none other than consciousness itself—the consciousness we all share and the very thing that makes it possible for you to read these words.

I realize this statement will cause some to scoff, Scientific Materialists in particular, because they maintain that brains create awareness. While other books I have written go into significant detail, this one explains briefly why that is not so. I urge you

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

to give the explanation thoughtful consideration if for no other reason than the belief brains create consciousness leads those considering suicide to think such action will end their problems. It will not. It simply postpones having to deal with them.

Scientific Materialism arose from the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who believed that God created the universe, wound it up, and let it go. In Hobbes' view, God is no longer involved in human affairs and nothing exists beyond the material world. That made sense to many thinkers in the seventeenth century and led to the Age of Reason, the explosion of science and its separation from religion, and ultimately to many remarkable achievements that benefit humankind today. With the advent of quantum physics, however, it is time to acknowledge that Hobbes' idea has served its purpose, is wide of the mark, and that the time has come to take the next step forward and embrace a new paradigm.

Scientific Materialists will probably not be alone in the push back against progress in our understand-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

ing of the true nature of existence. If you happen to be a Christian, for example, some of what I have written may conflict with Church doctrine you have been exposed to and may have come to accept. I can find nothing in the Bible, however, that contradicts any of it, and I can point to Scripture that's supportive. All I ask is that you read this book with an open mind, suspend disbelief until you finish, and if you agree it can make a positive difference in peoples' lives, pass it along. Give it to friends and relatives and your children to read. Ask them to do the same. Let us all work together to dispel the notion that he or she who dies with the most stuff has won the game of life—in other words, that things outside us are what's needed to achieve happiness.

This is not to say that bad days—even bad weeks or months—aren't going to happen. Businesses fail, houses burn down or get foreclosed, and someone we love may die unexpectedly. It is impossible to avoid the pain and sorrow that can come from such losses. But life goes on. Anyone can obtain long-range contentment, even ongoing happi-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

ness the other 85 or 90 percent of the time, assuming he or she lives in a developed country and can earn enough to buy sufficient food, clothing, and shelter to live at least somewhat comfortably.

To actually win the game of life, there is just one thing you have to know, and one thing you have to do. First, you must come to realize and accept that *you are eternal*. Plenty of evidence exists that when your body eventually wears out and dies, the you that's using it as a vehicle, and reading these words, will not. Second, you need to become your own best friend because you are going to be in your company for a long, long time. Today is not only the first day of the rest of this life, but of eternity, and there's an important implication that comes with that: The answer to the question, "To be, or not to be," is that you might as well decide to *be*, because "not to be" isn't an option.

Let me tell you a true story a friend of mine told me. Today he is past seventy years of age and heads a successful law firm, but he was sixteen years old

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

at the time the incident occurred. He was lying in bed, troubled. He had the usual teenage issues—perhaps more than most. His mother, for example, was overbearing. Looking back, he now thinks she may have been a paranoid schizophrenic. But that night what concerned him was that he thought he was in love with a girl who was his best friend's girlfriend. He didn't want to hurt his friend, and didn't want to be disloyal, but he was crazy about the girl, and she had indicated the feeling was mutual. I have an audio recording of what he told me because I interviewed him about it for the radio show I hosted at the time.

It was the middle of the night, and he said he couldn't sleep because he was so troubled by his dilemma. Whether what happened was a dream, or not—to this day, he thinks it actually happened—my friend, whom I will call Talison, says he was wide awake, wishing he'd never been born. Suddenly, a tornado-like vortex swooped down from above and yanked his consciousness out of his body. It seemed to catapult him up through the roof

of his house in a arch like a Fourth of July rocket.

Within seconds Talison found himself high above the earth looking down. He could see the whole of its curvature. The outline of the east coast was apparent because of the twinkling lights of the cities. He could look out over the Atlantic and see the demarcation of dark and light as dawn approached. Looking up, the firmament of the sky was nothing less than spectacular—thousands or perhaps millions of stars twinkling above.

What I have written below was transcribed from the audio recording of my interview with him:

“While I was on the way up,” Talison told me, “I didn’t have time to wonder if this was a dangerous situation I was in. But that thought did cross my mind once the movement stopped.”

“But you didn’t have a body,” I said.

“Exactly—that was my immediate response as well. I didn’t know how I’d gotten there, or even what part of me was actually there, but I didn’t have a body—so what was there to worry about?”

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Talison said he could see without eyes, was fully present and aware and was wondering how this could be, when he heard a barely audible pop.

“It resembled the slight pop one might hear if one is in a silent room and a bubble travels up through the neck of a long neck beer bottle and out the top. This carried with it the sense it was coming from the top of my head—the head I didn’t have.

“When this occurred, the earth disappeared. The sky disappeared. The stars—everything was gone. In the place I associated with my location was a faint glimmer of flickering light, a sort of dotted outline, which I took to be some sort of consciousness or spiritual essence.”

Talison said he thought if this flickering light represented him, then perhaps there were others in this space.

“Then I saw—in what seemed the distance—other flickers of light—many of them. I wondered if they might also be discarnate beings, so I asked the question, ‘Is any body there?’

“As far as I was concerned, I vocalized this, but of course I had no vocal cords because I had no body.”

“Did any one answer?” I asked.

“An answer came immediately. It was, ‘Yes.’ And these string-like flickering light beings moved toward me and surrounded me. I’m not sure how many there were but I would say about three dozen.

“In the dialog that ensued they all seemed to talk with a single voice—sort of like surround sound, or you might say, quadraphonic.”

“Then what happened?” I asked.

“A dialog—I asked them a number of questions and they answered.”

“This is fascinating,” I said. “Tell me, what did you ask them?”

“My first question was, ‘Where am I?’”

“And?”

“Not long after this happened, I made copious notes and eventually wrote them up, so I can tell you exactly what they said. They said, ‘You are in

a place that is no place.'

"What does that mean?" I said, and they said, 'You are outside of space and time as you know it.'

"What am I doing here?"

"They said, 'We brought you here because we have some very important things to tell you.'

"Oh, okay,' I said. 'Who are you?'"

"We are your guides.'

"This was in 1960, and I was 16 years old. I knew nothing about such things. I had no idea what they were talking about. So I said, 'What are guides?'"

"They said, 'You can think of us as that which is both you and not you.'

"Me and not me?'"

I couldn't help breaking in and said, "Sounds like, 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?'"

"Exactly," Talison said. "So then I said that if you're not going to tell me what guides are, can you at least tell me what guides do?"

"And they went on to give a beautiful and quite comforting explanation. They said everyone—all

living people—have guides. Guides are souls who sign on to facilitate the development of those of us who are embodied.”

I said, “Did they give you any advice about your current situation? About your dilemma concerning your friend and his girlfriend and wishing you had never been born?”

“They did,” Talison said. “After we got through the explanation of who they were, I asked them what important message they had brought me here to tell.

“They said, ‘The message is, your life is your own. It belongs to you.’

“I said, ‘Who else would it belong to?’

“They said, ‘We mean, you are free to do anything you want with your life, or to do nothing with it at all. You can be whatever you want, you can do whatever you want, you can say whatever you want, you can think and feel whatever you want, and whatever you do or don’t do with it is perfectly okay.’

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

“And they went on to say, and this was the heart of the matter, ‘Even if you should decide to self destruct’—they didn’t use the term, suicide—‘even if you should decide to terminate your life because it’s unpleasant, or for whatever reason, that’s perfectly okay. You may have been taught in school, or in church, that it’s not okay, that it’s some kind of a sin—that you will go to hell or whatever—forget all that. It’s simply not true. None of that is the way things really are—”

I couldn’t help myself, and broke in again, “But there must be some consequences—”

Talison said, “Oh, they didn’t say there wouldn’t be consequences. At this point, I started getting on the defensive. I saw where they were going and told them to wait a minute—I hadn’t been planning to self-destruct—or kill myself, or anything like that.

“And they said, ‘You had not reached that point yet. But if the thoughts you were having of wishing you did not exist had been followed to their conclusion—if we had not intervened—you would have

reached that point. And in some other situations, you may reach that point. And we are here to tell you, that's okay. You won't be judged.

“And then they delivered the punch line. They said, ‘But we want you to know that choice would be a waste of time.’”

I said, “Well, how does that work? What happens? Do you have to come back and do it all over again?”

Talison said, “Exactly—let me tell you. As a 16 year old, when they threw out the words ‘waste of time,’ that was something I could appreciate. I said, ‘Waste of time? What does that mean?’”

“They answered by giving me an explanation of the way life and evolution work. In summary, they said we go through a potentially infinite number of lifetimes and for the most part we choose our lifetimes, and what we're likely to experience in each. The thing that had been completely erroneous in my thinking and outlook before they brought me to that place was the idea I could cease to exist.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

“‘You can terminate a lifetime,’ they said, ‘but you cannot cease to exist. There is only life. If you decide to exit the one you are in you will simply have to come back and face the same situations again until you deal with and get through them. That’s the way it is. Once you have started on a curriculum, you have to see it through.’”

I said, “That reminds me of the movie, Groundhog Day. The main character gets stuck living the same day over and over again, until he gets it right. Only then does he finally move on.”

“A perfect allegory for the human condition,” Talison said.

I asked Talison why he thought his guides had intervened, that plenty of people commit suicide, and their guides don’t stop them.

Talison told me it was because he had committed suicide in other lives and had a tendency to do so. For this reason, they had been quick to act.

I guess they were tired of him wasting time.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

By the way, Talison was sent back to his body and slept soundly for what was left of the night. And in case you're wondering, he did not pursue his best friend's girlfriend. Two days following his extraordinary meeting with his guides—after he had started a job as a lifeguard for the summer—he met a girl and fell head over heels. His best friend's girlfriend was quickly—and completely—forgotten.

The Truth about Life

Did what Talison told me about really happen? Or was it a dream? I've come to the conclusion it doesn't matter. What Talison's guides said about life appears to be true whether he dreamed it, or it actually happened—based on research I have conducted over a period of forty years. The earth—this reality in which we find ourselves—is one of many, and it is essentially a school. You might call it Earth University, except that after considering the current level of evolution of our species, I've come to believe it's probably closer to the first or second grade—a step or two above kindergarten. Whatever the case may be, we come here to learn and to overcome issues that we must overcome before we graduate to the next grade level.

Speaking of issues, let's begin with the biggest one we all need to overcome, which is fear. Jesus of Nazareth, who came to earth to show others the way to our ultimate destination is quoted in the

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Bible as telling people 365 times—fittingly, once for every day of the year—not to be afraid. It must have been clear to Him that fear was programmed into our psyches.

How did our fear programming come to be?

Fear, in the form of the fight or flight response was something we had to have in order rise to the level we are on today. Surprising as it may be, as of this writing there are still a few people left on earth, perhaps numbering in the hundreds, who live as our Stone Age ancestors lived. These people have never come in contact with civilization. They have never seen a camera or a cell phone—much less a Starbucks or a Walmart. Their counting ability stops at ten because that's how many fingers they have.

These human beings reside deep in the jungles of Brazil and Peru. I'm aware of them because of a documentary I recently watched on Netflix. The researchers who created the film traveled far into an isolated area, many miles up a Peruvian river—al-

most to the border of Brazil—where they came in contact with a small tribe.

Such aboriginal people can be quite dangerous—restraint from violence is not one of their traits. They have no fear of being hauled off to jail—wouldn't know one if they saw one—and do not hesitate to kill strangers and take what they want or need. Nevertheless, by offering these people food, clothing, and medical aid for one of their tribe who was injured, the researchers were able to make friends and show them a few benefits of the modern world. The jungle people actually took up residence in a campsite set up by and shared with the researchers and became familiar with the modern conveniences the researchers had with them. As a result, the researchers were able to find how these people lived—that living off the land using only bows, arrows, and spears is far from easy. Rather, it is downright difficult. Sometimes the tribe went for days on end without food. Starving to death was an ever-present possibility. No wonder the jungle

people liked what the researchers were able to provide. Not having to worry about where the next meal was coming from must have seemed a godsend. And there was more. Clothes for example, were viewed as an unimaginable luxury and became a major reason they did not want to return to the wild.

Our distant ancestors certainly lived the same way for many thousands of years during the course of human evolution. Such an existence is bound to create fear, which after many generations became programmed in and a root cause of anti-social behavior such as robbing and killing neighbors and taking their food and treasure. But the fear of starvation and the anti-social behavior it creates no longer serves modern humans in civilized countries, especially those of us who have the talent and skill to earn a living. We can only eat a finite number of hot dogs, hamburgers and French fries. We can only drink so many cans of beer.

The pastor of my church made a relevant ob-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

servation recently in one of his sermons. If you earn the minimum wage, which at today's rate translates to \$15,000 per year, and you suddenly get a raise to \$100,000, your life will change dramatically and your sense of happiness and contentment will very likely increase—at least for a while. But if you make \$100,000 per year and get an increase to \$500,000, your life probably will not be all that different. Certainly, you will feel a momentary sense of joy. You might decide to throw a party. But as time marches on, your life will not fundamentally change. Oh, you might trade in your Toyota Camry and buy a Maserati. You might sell your house on Elm Street and buy a bigger one on Grove. But the Camry was already getting you where you wanted to go, and the house on Elm kept out the rain and the cold and probably had central air. The people I know who make half a million a year do not appear any happier than those who make considerably less. The cliché is true: “Money can't buy love,” and it can't buy happiness. Lasting happiness is

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

found within, which is why I urge you to keep reading—the information and suggestions in this little book can lead to that.

Most of us are able to provide a service to others that produces the income we need to clothe, shelter, and feed ourselves and others who may depend on us. Yet many of us still operate from fear and suffer the consequences. What's required to make the shift away from a difficult life is to change how we view the world. So let's start by considering a worldview that may be different from the one you now hold.

Let me say that some details that follow may not be 100 percent accurate, but I truly believe the big picture I will do my best to paint is as close to the truth as anyone can get at this point in time. As a college-educated, open-minded skeptic, I have been spent more than forty years attempting to discern the truth about life and the true nature of reality. Every time I've uncovered a fact that didn't fit the worldview I held at the time I uncovered it, I

have rearranged my worldview until it fit. Most people simply don't go to the trouble, nor do they expend the effort to do that.

What facts am I referring to? I'm talking about near death and out of body experiences, hauntings, documented cases of reincarnation, memories formed while a person's body and brain were clinically dead, spirit possession, psychokinesis, precognition, and clairvoyance. I'm talking the "spooky action at a distance" and the "participating observer" phenomena that occur in quantum physics experiments. Many scientists continue to dismiss such things as anomalies even though most happen nowadays with a good deal of frequency—have even become commonplace. Instead, I try to make sense of them and to find theories conjured up by others, or to construct theories of my own, to explain how and why they happen. Now, after forty years, I have a worldview that bears no resemblance to the one I had when I started. Unlike the many scientists who remain in denial, my worldview fits the data.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

I began this quest in my early twenties when something happened—a paranormal experience—that raised doubts in my mind about the materialistic worldview I'd been brought up to hold. I became fascinated with metaphysics and read everything on the subject I could get my hands on. I joined the Rosicrucian Order, studied the lessons, took the tests, and advanced from Novice to Adept. But I did not confine my investigations to the ancient and esoteric Rosicrucian teachings of natural law. I read new books, and I read old books. I read Thomas Troward, Ralph Waldo Trine, James Allen, many works based on the Edgar Cayce readings, and I read Napoleon Hill, and Dale Carnegie. I went to church every Sunday, and as of this writing, I have attended a weekly Sunday School Bible study for more than 25 years.

A book I read near the outset of my quest had perhaps the biggest impact on how I viewed the world, and it started me off in the right direction. Published in 1975, it refuted the idea that intelli-

gence, consciousness, and awareness came about as a result of evolution. You see, if matter is all that is—as today’s Scientific Materialist dogma maintains—consciousness could not have existed until evolution progressed to the point it produced a brain. Therefore, the prevailing, materialist worldview adamantly holds that brains create consciousness, which comes about as a result of electrons jumping across synapses, or some such. In other words, consciousness is a phenomenon created by brain activity, which of course means the phenomena mentioned above cannot happen.

But no amount of denial can change the fact that it does.

The more than 40 year old, now out of print book I’m talking about argued that scientific materialism was off base. Entitled *Intelligence Came First*, it was compiled and edited by Ernest Lester Smith, a Fellow of the Royal Society—the prestigious scientific academy of the United Kingdom dedicated to promoting excellence in science. The

book caused quite a lot of controversy. The premise of it is that throughout eons of evolution, needs have preceded the organs through which they are fulfilled. It seems extremely unlikely, if not statistically impossible, for example, that eyes, ears, taste buds, hearts, lungs, kidneys, livers, and so forth came about by accident, as materialists apparently believe. It seems much more logical that each new organ developed in response to a need. That being the case, why would the brain be an exception?

The book put forth a cogent and compelling argument that intelligence came first, quite able to function in its own realm. This is not so difficult for us in the twenty-first century to fathom, given how much non-physical-based intelligence seems to exist today. You can go into any Panera or Starbucks, sign your laptop onto WiFi, and instantly find the answer to practically any question—seemingly out of thin air. But in the nineteenth century, when Scientific Materialism arose, even the most learned and clever scientist would have maintained

what you just did in Starbucks was impossible. He'd have insisted the answer to your query had to have been inside your laptop, and you were engaging in trickery. Even back in 1975 when *Intelligence Came First* was published, it would have been difficult to believe a computer could pull information out of the air—even though radio, television, and other forms of wireless communication existed at that time.

As time marched on, I did a lot of reading and studying, and I learned as everyone knows today that physical reality is not as rock solid as it seems. Everything we can see is energy—vibrations—electrons, protons, quarks, and such—flying around at the speed of light. As Albert Einstein revealed, $E=MC^2$.

Almost thirty years of study went by and in 2007, I took the opportunity to become the talk show host and producer of an Internet radio show called *The Truth about Life*. For two years I read books by and conducted interviews with more than

a hundred authors engaged in quests for truth. Among them were medical doctors, parapsychologists, metaphysicians, quantum physicists, near death survivors, theologians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and all manner of researchers into the true nature of reality. Talison, whose guides yanked him from his body, was one of my guests. Many I talked to had similar stories. In fact, I don't recall any who still held to a materialist point of view. If you want to know some of the details concerning the many interesting things I learned, read my book, *ANSWERS: Why You're Here, How It Happened, What to Do about It*.

As a result of that experience it seems clear to me we humans are now in the process of shifting from the old materialist paradigm to a new one that recognizes matter is NOT all that is. Everything we can see touch and feel, as well as everything we cannot see, touch, or feel comes from a single source—the ground of being most people call God. This ground of being is a vast ocean of organizing

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

awareness, consciousness, and intelligence. It goes by a number of names: Brahman, Infinite Mind, God, or Primordial Consciousness [PC].

Choose and use whichever you prefer.

In an effort to grow and evolve, and perhaps to amuse itself—as the philosopher Alan Watts (1915-1973) would have us believe—Infinite Mind, God, or Primordial Consciousness created souls (units of consciousness) in its/His own image. PC did this so they could interact with PC and with each other. Some who have thought about this say PC’s motive was a desire for companionship, others like Watts think boredom may have led to their creation as a form of amusement. Still others think it was for PC itself to evolve. I vote for evolution and procreation since the two seem pretty much ubiquitous in physical creation, and the idea of “as above, so below” makes sense to me.

Here is one way to wrap your mind around what took place. Picture Primordial Consciousness as a bed sheet. A couple of children make puppets

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

in the sheet by forming it around their hands and placing rubber bands around their wrists to keep the bubbles in the sheet in place. It's still all one sheet, but the children now have puppets they can use to interact with one another.

If this theory has validity, and it makes sense to me, it means we are all connected with each other, and we are connected with everything else, because at the fundamental level we are parts of, and at one with, the same consciousness (bed sheet). This explains the “spooky action at a distance” phenomenon in quantum physics—that subatomic particles separated by great distance can instantaneously affect each other’s behavior. This is so because they are each part of a single mind, and when it comes to mind, distance, space, and time are not factors. At the level of mind, those things do not exist. This also explains the “participating observer” since the observer’s mind and the Infinite Mind are one. What the observer thinks ought to happen, happens.

Assuming the one-mind theory is accurate, we

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

are and remain fully integrated pieces of the larger mind with access to the capabilities and capacities of that mind. Our individual potential is the potential of the entire Infinite Mind. To what extent we actualize or achieve that potential through self-improvement or self-actualization is up to us. Once created, Souls (individuated units of consciousness), persist within the Infinite Mind indefinitely and have the opportunity to evolve to the limits of the Infinite Mind, each by developing and following its own path.

Let me say that again in a different way. If we evolve the quality of our being sufficiently, we will return to the source and actually become the source, or perhaps more accurately, we will become a new source—connected, but individuated. Because we contain the potential of the whole, we will not be swallowed up by the consciousness system, but rather we will become a fully integrated and fully aware unit of it. Our destiny, in other words, is to become co-creators with the Source—perhaps even one of many universes. As Jesus said, “Is it not

written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’?
(John 10:34, NIV translation)

I imagine some are going to find that “way out there,” as the hippies of my generation used to say, so let’s back up and work through what might have taken place. Our evolution began in non-physical reality. Time passed, and the pace of our evolution slowed down. After a while, we units of consciousness had things pretty well figured out. The living was easy. We didn’t need food and shelter. Challenges were few.

Since most of us have a lazy streak, not having challenges may have been all right with us [individuated units of consciousness]. But the problem for Primordial Consciousness was that without challenges there’s no impetus to grow, and PC wanted to grow. PC may have gotten bored and decided something had to be done. So what did Primordial Consciousness do? Why, create physical reality, of course, because physical reality poses all kinds of challenges.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

So, PC spoke the Big Bang into being to counter stagnated growth and to speed up and to step up the action. Physical reality also provides a way for us [units of consciousness] to retain the underlying wisdom achieved during a sojourn into the physical realm, and yet to start over every so often without the baggage of accumulated erroneous beliefs. It's obvious the misinformation we accept as true in this realm can inhibit our growth. For example, one of the erroneous beliefs inhibiting the growth of many today is that physical reality is all there is. Belief in Scientific Materialism has these people stuck and treading water. That is a good reason for them to read this book.

At the risk of repeating myself, let me elaborate on the rationale behind the existence of non-physical individuated units of consciousness (souls) and separate physical vehicles for those units—bodies. The phenomenon of birth, death and rebirth [reincarnation] is a major benefit provided by physical reality when it comes to soul growth. By the way,

if you think reincarnation doesn't happen, you might benefit from reading my book, *REINCAR-NATION: Good News for Open-Minded Christians & Other Truth-Seekers*. I cite a number of documented cases, but you need not take my word for it. Researchers at University of Virginia Division of Perceptual Studies have more than 2500 in their files. Anyhow, because we come and we go and almost never remember our past lives, we are able to start over every so often with a relatively clean slate. The benefit from the point of view of PC is that learning takes place faster than it would otherwise while also creating plenty of entertaining action. Being able to make a new start without the erroneous beliefs of a previous life, but with the wisdom gained, enables us to increase the quality of our consciousness while continuing to exercise free will.

Nevertheless, when you stop and think about it, this is still a slow process. I'm reminded of the movie I referenced in my interview with Talison,

Groundhog Day, where the protagonist has to relive February 2nd over and over until he finally takes all the right actions. It took him quite a number of times even though he woke up each morning remembering what had happened the previous day.

Now, in the early twenty-first century, the vast majority does not understand the purpose of life and the situation in which we find ourselves. We are like avatars in a computer simulation that don't know we are in a game—much less do we know the rules. If that remains the case, how long do you suppose it will take us to win and move on? How long before we graduate?

A long time and many incarnations.

Personally, I'd like to advance now, and I bet you would, too. That's why I wrote this book—to speed things up for us all, and at the same time, to help each one of us avoid a lot of pain and grief in the meantime and instead lead a joyful and fulfilling life. So continue reading because that's what the rest of this book will explain.

How to Banish Fear

Let's dig into the fear issue because there are types of fears beyond whether we will have enough to eat that most of us need to jettison. To learn what you are afraid of, try tuning in to your moment-to-moment stream of consciousness and observing what makes you worried, anxious, resentful, uptight, afraid, angry, and so on.

Jesus' brother James said we should be glad when we face trials. Trials can be opportunities to build strength, self-control and perseverance. In addition, the emotions these trials generate can be signals that identify fears and attachments that have you blocked. Try to step outside yourself and identify unsettled emotions, tugs and urges that have become part of your programming. Slow down and consider what triggered a negative emotion. Did your temper flare? Why? Why was it so important for things to go a certain way? If you retrace what you felt back to its cause, in most cases, you will

come to a particular variety of fear, and it's been said that only two fears are instinctive: the fear of high places and loud noises. Your other fears were acquired, and whatever was acquired can be disposed of.

Fears usually can be grouped under one of six headings: the fear of poverty (or failure), of criticism, of ill health, of the loss of love, of old age, and of death.

I've listed the fear of poverty (failure) first because in many ways it can be the most debilitating. It is self-fulfilling in that traits develop that bring it about. For example, are you a procrastinator? An underlying fear of failure is probably the root cause and can be counted upon to produce that result.

Are you overly cautious? Do you see the negative side of every circumstance or stall for the "right time" before taking action? Do you worry (that things will not work out), have doubts (generally expressed by excuses or apologies about why one probably won't be able to perform), do you suf-

fer from indecision (which leads to someone else, or circumstances, making the decision for you)?

Are you indifferent? This generally manifests as laziness or a lack of initiative, enthusiasm or self-control.

Step back and listen for internal voices that say “can’t” or “don’t” or “won’t” or “too risky” or “why bother?”

How do you get rid of them? Shoo them away.

No matter who you are—president, king, or knave—the only thing over which you have absolute control is your thoughts.

You may say, I can’t control what thoughts pop into my head. True. You may not control what thoughts arise, but you can decide whether to discard one or to keep it. As we will see in a future section, negative thoughts can be viewed as interference. They are not part of you. Your higher self is on your side—wants you to be successful. You can decide that a thought is counterproductive and throw it away, or you can turn it over and over

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

in your mind, nurture it and let it grow. We will discuss this in greater detail in the section concerning how to banish negative thoughts. It's important to do so because whatever thoughts you keep will expand and eventually manifest. You are what you are because of your thoughts. So make sure they are productive.

If what I've been writing about on this page is a serious problem for you, go out and buy some self-help tapes that will plant positive thoughts in your mind in place of the negative ones. Play them to and from work and before you go to sleep at night. Use self-hypnosis tapes. In fact you don't have to go out and buy those. There are a bunch of good, positive meditation recordings on YouTube. Find some. Play them over and over for at least a month. Get all that junk out of your head, and replace it with thoughts that are positive. One I like and listen to frequently is "Let Go and Let God" by Barry Tesar.

What about the other fears? They're to be discarded in the same manner. If you suffer from fear

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

of criticism, for example, it probably came about as a result of a parent or sibling who constantly tore you down to build himself up. You'll know this is a problem if you are overly worried about what others might think, if you lack poise, are self-consciousness or extravagant. (Why extravagant? Because of the voice which says you need to keep up with the Joneses.) You must rid yourself of inner voices that tell you to think even twice about what others will say. Simply eliminate them.

Let's think for a minute about the fear of criticism. There have been places and times in history when what others thought was worth worrying about. My great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandmother, Suzanna Martin, for example, was accused of being a witch and hanged in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. She was an old lady. Probably, she looked like a witch. But her downfall likely came about because of the stir she caused after her husband died. She was able to run the farm successfully without a man around. Think of the

talk. Such a thing wasn't possible, or so they believed, without the use of witchcraft.

The opinions of Suzanna Martin's neighbors mattered a great deal. They led to an unpleasant and untimely death.

What about today?

In Iran or North Korea you might have to watch out what your neighbors think or what the "virtue police" hear about you, but this simply is no longer a valid concern in developed countries. What others think or don't think of you or anyone else is their problem. Yet worrying about what they think can cause a great deal of misery, create karma that will have to be worked out, and cause interference between your conscious and your subconscious minds that blocks the channel of communication.

I had a friend who was engaged to be married and set a date before he realized marrying the woman would be a mistake. But he went ahead and married her anyway because he felt it was too late not to. Can you imagine the pain he brought him-

self and his bride? He was worried what people would say or think. He let those inner voices overrule what his intuition was telling him and got married to avoid criticism. He lived with her for a year and then went through an unpleasant and very expensive divorce. He allowed his fear of criticism to do a lot of harm.

What about the fear of ill health? To rid yourself of this, it should be enough to know that what you worry about and think about happens. Ever noticed that it's the people who talk about illness, worry about illness, are preoccupied with this or that possible illness, think they feel a pain here or there or were exposed to some germ, who are precisely the people who stay sick most of the time? The power of suggestion is at work.

Suppose you're a tennis buff. You're in a big match, and it's close, and you arrive at a crucial point. Your opponent is serving. Yell out, "You're playing great today, Morris. Don't blow it. This is a big point coming up. Whatever you do, don't

double fault.” You’ve started him worrying. Watch him double fault. It’s dirty. It will create negative karma. But it works. Our subconscious minds create the reality we dwell upon.

How about the fear of the loss of love? This one manifests itself in the form of jealousy and is self-fulfilling like the others. The person you try so hard to hang onto feels smothered, with the result that you end up pushing that person away. Try being yourself. Give them love, but give them room. If they leave you, they would have done so anyway. You can now move on to a truly meaningful relationship.

Next is the fear of old age. This is closely connected to the fear of ill health and the fear of poverty because these are the conditions a person really is concerned about deep down. The power of suggestion is hard at work here, too. If you think you’re too old to do this or that, you will indeed be too old.

Now we’ve come to that final bugaboo, the fear of death. As you now know, there’s nothing to fear

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

except having been fearful in this life. Consider the millions who have had near-death experiences and are no longer afraid to die. They're convinced they'll be greeted by their guides as well as by loved ones who have gone before. They look forward to being bathed once again in the all-encompassing light that many have described as total, unconditional love. Most do not expect to experience pain. It has been reported by many that the spirit exits the body the instant it looks as though death is inevitable.

Only a handful who have had hellish experiences worry about what they may encounter after death of the body. These folks need to know what you know. Each of us creates his or her own reality. We experience what we expect to experience, what we think we deserve. In the physical world, this takes time. In the nonphysical world of spirit, which is the medium of the mind, we instantly create our reality, just as we do in dreams. If we expect Hell, the Hell we believe we deserve is the Hell we

will get. If we expect Heaven, our vision of Heaven is what we will have.

Anyone who has had a lucid dream will understand what I mean. Such a dream is one in which a person realizes he's dreaming. I've had many and I look forward to them because it's more fun than Disney World. As soon as you're aware you're dreaming, you can begin to compose the dream, determine the players, the surroundings, and the action. Want to fly over the Grand Canyon? All you have to do is "think" this. Fly over is what you will do, no airplane required. Like anything it takes practice, but I've gotten so I can swoop and turn and loop the loop.

Want to attend a cocktail party populated by Hollywood stars? You'll be there with Robert DeNiro or Scarlett Johansson. These characters will, of course, be your own thought projections.

Until you picked up this book, you may have thought you were at the mercy of conditions outside yourself, that you've either been lucky or un-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

lucky, and that chance has brought you where you are today. This is not true. You have brought yourself to this place, either consciously or unconsciously. If it's not where you want to be, you have arrived here because you have been programmed incorrectly. You have been out of touch with your higher self. Perhaps you hear snippets from it every now and then but ignore what it's trying to say because of other voices that beat it back with "can't," "don't," "shouldn't," "too risky." This is interference that does not come from you. Your higher self wants much more for you and knows more is possible. Join forces with your higher self and allow it lead you to happiness and fulfillment.

Seek Harmony in All that You Do

More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle (384-322 BC) famously said, “Nature abhors a vacuum.” Anyone who has opened a vacuum packed can of coffee, and heard a swish of air rush in, knows that’s true. It’s because the natural state of things—the state that nature seeks—is one of harmony. When everything is in balance, peace prevails. Therefore, if you would create a successful, peaceful life—a life of happiness and contentment—you must seek harmony. That’s a basic law of metaphysics known as The Law of Harmony.

The Law of Harmony has to do with Karma because the purpose of Karma is to attain harmony. Karma is cause and effect. If throw a rock into a pond, you will disturb the harmony of the pond. You were the cause, and the effect was the splash. The ripples flow out, and they flow back, until harmony is restored. In the same way, disharmonious karmic actions go out into the universe and come

back upon you, lifetime after lifetime until harmony is restored.

The concept of Karma was dealt with in detail by the twentieth century's most documented psychic, Edgar Cayce (1877-1945). To fully understand how it works, you might want to read an excellent book called *Many Mansions: The Edgar Cayce Story on Reincarnation* written by Gina Cerminara (1914-1984). According to Cayce's psychic readings, Karma is not punishment. It is a learning tool. A unit of differentiated consciousness (a soul, or what Cayce referred to as an "entity") will continue to meet situations similar to those that created the Karma until the soul begins making the right choices. We are each like the character in the movie *Groundhog Day*. As I mentioned already, he is forced to experience the same day over and over until he reacts to each situation with harmony and love rather than with cynicism. Only then does he handle things correctly. Once the quality of his consciousness has evolved to a level that produces

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

right action, he not only gets the girl, he is finally able to move on to February 3rd. As Talison said, the movie is an allegory for the true nature of life.

Let's return to our discussion of harmony. The universe and all energy functions as a yin-yang balance, resulting in a tension between opposites. Yin is negative. Yang is positive. We all contain these dual aspects expressed as love and fear (which is a form of hate), harmony and chaos, good and evil. This tension is necessary for structure to exist, and we are energy structures. As such, we should not make the mistake of thinking that negative is always bad. A storage battery provides an analogy. One plate is charged positive, the next negative, the next positive, the next negative, and so on. Interaction between the plates generates the energy. The negative plate is not better or worse than the positive plate. Everything, us included, needs tension to exist.

Nevertheless, it is true most of us express our yin energy in undesirable ways such as excess hard

work, gambling, dangerous activities such as drinking too much, driving too fast, or by arguing or fighting. Illness is an expression of yin energy. War is the ultimate expression. But yin energy can be expressed in different, non-destructive ways, such as positive challenges. We all need a challenge to strive for and will self-destruct without one—as will be discussed in an upcoming section.

What else can be said about harmony and the ill effects of the lack of it? That which you resist you draw to you, and in doing so will perpetuate its influence upon your life. Resistance is fear, and something to be resolved. If you are extremely resistant to your mother in law, for example, the result will be continual conflicts with her. If, however, you stop resisting by consciously releasing your feelings toward her and ignoring situations that come about that would otherwise draw you in, the problem you had with her will dissolve. It may not seem possible, but most disharmonious situations can be resolved with a change of viewpoint.

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Change your perspective and often you can eliminate the problem because you are no longer affected by it. Nothing has to change but your view of what's going on.

Here's something else to think about: "That which you resist, you become, if not in this lifetime, in a future incarnation." So, for example, if you resist or fear people of another race, next time you might incarnate as someone of that race. What better way to overcome a fear but to become what you fear?

Until you resolve your Karma, you will continue to incarnate here on earth. This is not something someone else—God or Satan, for example—does to you. You alone decide what you most need to learn on your earthly sojourns. In each life you seek out other souls, some with shared histories, and always those with karmic issues matching your needs.

It's important to know that whenever you act with intension and create disharmony, you pile up

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karmic debt. Thoughts, emotions, and words are just as powerful at creating Karma as deeds are. The motives and desires behind what you think, feel, and do are what count. Disharmonious acts, thoughts, and so forth must be balanced in this life or in a future one unless you mitigate the Karma you have created by gaining the wisdom required to overcome it.

The wisdom in this book can help you create a pathway to get off the wheel of reincarnation. Let me emphasize, however, that mechanically obeying the rules will not do you much good at first. It is, however, a way to begin. As you follow the rules and time goes by, you will begin to internalize the wisdom behind them. In other words, you must “fake it until you feel it.” Eventually, the wisdom created will erase your karmic debt. By “wisdom,” I mean a sense of knowing what is true and good by observing what works over time. Learn to love others, and you will mitigate your suffering.

Sadly, however, most of us seem to learn fastest

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

through pain—through directly experiencing the consequences of our actions. Touch a hot stove, for example, and you won't do that again. Less obviously, if you greedily take from others instead of learning through wisdom and love that it's wrong, you will have to learn directly from experience how it feels to be violated in this way—either in this life, or in a future one. An alternative is to learn and follow the rules. Then, as you move toward a Karmic test, you will proceed with harmony, which will mitigate the impact of the event.

Here's an example. Let's say that in your last life you were married to a soul who is your mate today. In that previous life, you cruelly left your mate for another. Before you were born into this lifetime, you and your former mate agreed he or she would leave you under similar circumstances. This will allow you to balance your Karma and to directly experience the pain and sorrow of abandonment. If through wisdom, however, you realize it is easier and less harmful for all involved for you

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

to detach from the relationship with love, you will ease the pain of parting while also passing the test you set up for yourself.

Here is another example. Assume you have predestined a severe relationship test for September of your 29th year. In the meantime you have learned to seek harmony by being positive, non judgmental, and without expectations in your relationships. As a result, you may only experience an argument with your mate on that fateful September day. If, however, you have not learned and instead operate with knee-jerk reactions, which without doubt will have intensified the disharmony in your relationship, you will likely experience a divorce.

Here's another: In your most recent past life you were so proud you were unwilling to accept assistance from others. Pride is a form of fear. As a result, in this life you have predestined an event that will cause you to be institutionalized for many years. On a soul level, you decided you needed to create circumstances that would force you to sub-

due your pride and allow others to give to you. But through wisdom, you have overridden your pride, opened your heart, and gladly accept assistance from others. Because of this, you will not have to be institutionalized. Wisdom has erased the Karma.

Okay, I can hear someone saying, “Does this mean I have to roll over and play dead? Become a patsy? Do I always have to give in to others?”

No. For example, you must never give in to abject evil. Adolph Hitler, Stalin, Kim Jong-un, the Iranian Mullahs, and the Islamic State are examples of evil personified that cannot be appeased. Such evil will view any attempt at compromise as weakness. This over-the-top form of evil is all about disharmony. Chaos is its stock and trade. Appeasement will only make a situation worse. The only way to return the world to harmony is to crush and abolish it. Unmitigated evil must be put out of business all together. More will be said about this in the next section.

Fortunately, abject evil is rare. Usually, it is

possible to find common ground with an adversary and in doing so achieve harmony. Let's say, for example, you're the president of a company and a competitor or vendor files a lawsuit against your business based on some real or perceived grievance. Rather than lash out, the first thing to do is to gather all the facts. Get everyone from your company together who knows anything about the vendor and what may actually have happened to cause the dispute. The group should do its best to determine what actually happened and to come up with all of the issues and interests the other side may have.

Then, such questions ought to be answered such as, "What can we do to get them what they want or need?" To persuade them to withdraw the suit, you might decide to offer to them a juicy contract, or an attractive benefit in some other area of the business or part of the country. Your objective is to restore harmony, and this can often be done by looking for and finding a win-win solution.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

You and the group will probably want to brainstorm and evaluate the effects different actions will have on the specific individuals bringing suit.

What does Joe Schmoie really want, personally?

You might consider packages of actions that include things you perhaps don't like but could still make sense as part of an overall package that on balance is good for you as well as for them. Once you have it all out on the table, you will be in position to develop a proposal. You may be surprised at how fast an agreement that resolves the issue can be reached.

The bottom line is that Karma can be experienced to the letter of the law, or it can be mitigated by mercy and grace. If you give others love, mercy and grace, you will receive the same in return. It has been said that if you want friends, you must be a friend. If you want to be loved, you must love others. Such actions will greatly increase the quality of your life.

Here is an example: You have destined a future

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

event in which you will be the victim of slander and gossip, which could easily ruin your career. In the years preceding this event, however, you have been so kind and loving to others that it is obvious to your higher self that you have learned your lesson. Because of this, the predestined event will be mitigated to the point it will have little or no effect on you.

Suffice it to say that things will begin to fall into place when you are in harmony with the universe. And, happily, the benefits do not stop with simply falling into place. Suppose you are pursuing a challenge and fervently want to accomplish it? Assuming you have the education, the knowledge, and the qualifications required to reach your goal, and assuming you feel strongly about it at an emotional level, you will almost certainly realize success because the Law of Attraction will kick in. It's as though you are a magnet, drawing what you need to you. The greater your desire, the more you power you will give to those on the other side to

assist you, and the more rapidly the manifestation will occur.

Your energy—in the form of thoughts, words, emotions, and deeds—causes all your experiences just as the collective thoughts, words, emotions, and deeds of humankind as a whole create the environment we all share. Each part or unit of a totality has its own characteristics while at the same time possessing the characteristics of the whole. Every Soul, living and discarnate, is connected at the level of the Infinite Mind. We are all one, and like the many sub-personalities within you, the dominant traits of the human race will emerge to resolve our group Karma.

In summary, fear is a big problem for all humankind; love is the answer.

Banish Negative Thoughts

We have talked about yin and yang, that there has to be tension for our reality to exist and for things to stay in balance, i.e., good and evil. To achieve and maintain happiness, however, we must guard against allowing evil to get the upper hand. Some reading this are going to think I have flipped out when they read what comes next, but have you ever considered the possibility that the negative thoughts you have or voices you may hear are actually evil spirits hoping to do you harm? Why not? The concept of evil spirits is found in cultures and civilizations throughout the world. Doesn't that suggest there may be something to it? As has been said, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." In China, for example, a great deal of tradition and lore exists about ghosts and what to do to keep sinister ghosts away. In Africa, many people think the world is inhabited by a whole jungle of spirits, both good and bad. The Kabbalah in Judaism speaks about evil

spirits and in some traditions such as the Kabbalah, it is thought that an evil thought can create an evil spirit, just as a good thought or good deed can create a good spirit. Are you a Christian? Remember in Mark 5:9 when Jesus came upon a man possessed by a demon, and asked, “What is your name?” and the demon replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” It wasn’t one demon, it was a bunch, which fits with what one psychologist found, as you will soon see.

Suffice it to say the concept of evil spirits is found all over the world. It would be hard to find a culture in which it doesn’t exist to some degree. We know that reincarnation happens. We know that memories can be formed when a person’s body is clinically dead. We know that a person’s spirit can exist without the body. That being the case, why should there not be evil spirits that exist without bodies? And if so, why wouldn’t there be evil spirits that are looking for opportunities to do harm to the living?

My research into possession indicates that a great many people, including many medical doctors, believe possession can happen and does happen. Officials of the Roman Catholic Church, for example, still train a number of priests each year to conduct exorcisms, and they officially specify those deemed qualified for the task. According to one source, a twenty-seven page ritual exists which is followed to drive out demons.

The memoirs of Cardinal Jacques Martin [no relation], the former prefect of the pontifical household, say that Pope John Paul II successfully exorcised a woman in 1982. She was brought to him writhing on the ground. Father Gabriele Amorth told *La Stampa*, an Italian newspaper, that Pope John Paul II successfully conducted three exorcisms during his pontificate. Amorth said, "He carried out these exorcisms because he wanted to give a powerful example. He wanted to give the message that we must once again start exorcising those who are possessed by demons . . . I have seen many strange things [during exorcisms] . . . objects such

as nails spat out. The devil told a woman that he would make her spit out a transistor radio and lo and behold she started spitting out bits and pieces of a radio transistor. I have seen levitations, and a force that needed six or eight men to hold the person still. Such things are rare, but they happen.”

Roman Catholic teachings indicate demons interfere in one of two ways with their victims. They can cause an obsession, in which the demon fills the mind of its victim with evil thoughts. The second is actual possession in which Satan or one of his minions physically takes over the human body. Reader’s Digest Press published an absolutely fascinating book on this subject in 1976 called *Hostage to the Devil*. It was written by Malachi Martin [also no relation], a former Jesuit Professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, who studied at Oxford and has a doctorate in Semitic languages, archeology, and Oriental history.

In recent years, a number of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health practitioners

have gotten into the business of what they call “de-possession.” They would rather call it de-possession than exorcism because they don’t necessarily approach it from a religious perspective. They say they rarely encounter Satan and his demons although they tend to agree Satan and his minions exist, and that obsession or possession by them can happen. According Dr. Louise Ireland-Frey (1912-2014), a psychiatrist, “[Satan and demons] do not belong to the human kingdom, being the negative aspect, composed of the ‘fallen angels’ and their slaves. This is not drawn from a religious source . . . I have been told these things by the dark entities [I have] encountered. A number of them have told us that they are delighted to get us to believe that they exist. When we think of them, speak of them, and ‘believe in’ them—it makes their work of invading easier! Thinking fearfully of them, brooding compulsively, and talking often of them certainly predisposes a person to attracting their focused attention.”

The approach used to de-possess a patient who

is afflicted in this way is less confrontational than that of an exorcism by a Catholic priest. In addition, the therapist routinely tries to help the invading spirit find its way into the light.

Let me pause here to say I can almost hear some of you out there chuckling and a few of you laughing out loud, but I assure you, I am not making this up. In fact, much has been written about this. I conducted a Google search and turned up a web site that offered a dozen different books on the subject. I'm going to relate some of what Dr. Louise Ireland-Frey had to say in her book, *Freeing the Captive: The Emerging Therapy of Spirit Attachment* because her credentials are strong. She was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Colorado University with a Master of Arts degree from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and a medical degree from Tulane University.

Dr. Louise Ireland-Frey was a psychiatrist who used hypnotism to detach earthbound spirits who were causing trouble for her patients. She wrote

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that when her clients were regressed to a previous life and came to the death experience terminating that lifetime, it was possible to continue the regression past the physical death and on into the after-death state. Similarly, when she contacts earthbound entities—those who may or may not have attached themselves to a living person—she can also ask them to recall the circumstances of their physical death. Dr. Ireland-Frey used an intermediary to make this contact. Essentially, she hypnotized someone, either the patient she is trying to help or a willing assistant, and the hypnotized individual “channels” the earth-bound entity.

Ireland-Frey wrote that under normal circumstances the psycho spiritual part of a person—the mind, the psyche, or soul finds itself floating above the body, still conscious of itself and aware of the people and activities around the dead body. This stage can be brief. The now disembodied consciousness usually feels free and light and relieved, and it senses it can go wherever it seems to be

drawn. For instance, it might be drawn through the so-called tunnel and into the light we've all heard about. This light is perceived as alive and sentient, a Being of Light who welcomes the personality with understanding, kindness, and love. She said that most people find themselves going to a state that is peaceful and beautiful. Occasionally, however, a person will report a chilly, lonely or horrifying experience.

There are stages after death that I cover in some detail in my book, *Life After Death, Powerful Evidence You Will Never Die*. Not everyone, however, passes through the same stages or has the same experiences. A person who is heavy with negative emotions and undesirable habits such as rage, cruelty, greed and so forth may be too negative to be attracted to the light, and will turn away, perhaps not even perceiving it, and go to a "place"—a vibrational frequency, or "dimension"—that is appropriate to its present nature, i.e., dark and heavy. Ireland-Frey said souls are a little like substances suspended in water, the "heaviest" after death sink

to the lowest astral levels, the “lightest” float to the upper levels, and the rest find the appropriate levels in-between. This, she said, is the norm.

Some die not having a clear idea of what to expect after death and find themselves bewildered upon discovering they are still aware. It is as though they are alive, but their body is dead and they cannot reenter it. Rather than going to the light or finding an appropriate vibrational level, they remain on the earth plane where they are able to see and hear living persons but are invisible and inaudible to the living. Naturally, they are likely to find this very frustrating. Not knowing what to do or where to go, many such disembodied spirits start to wander, either aimlessly, or perhaps to some chosen place or person.

Some wanderers remain in the area of their body—which may now be buried. I have an acquaintance, for example, who says he is sensitive to the presence of the disembodied and will not go near a graveyard. Others may find a home in a

house or other building and become the “ghosts” who haunt these places. According to Ireland-Frey many wanderers find a place that seems lighter or warmer than the chilly darkness of the earth-bound state in which they have been, and it turns out to be the body or aura of a living person—often without either the living host or the invading spirit being aware of the relationship. This is never a positive situation, but if the invading spirit is particularly negative, someone who actually enjoyed causing harm to others in life, the spirit of that person will lose or totally subjugate in the afterlife any good aspects it may have once possessed. The result of this can be disastrous for the living person they invade.

What sort of person is a likely host for an invading spirit?

A person whose aura is weak or “open” is most susceptible. This may be because the individual has been in an accident, or suffered an illness, been under an anesthetic for an operation, or recently suffered an emotional shock such as grief or fear.

In addition, the Roman Catholic Church states that engaging in such occult activities as fortune telling, a séance, Ouija boards and the like can open an invasion path.

Ireland-Frey as well as other therapists in her line of work have identified several degrees of closeness of such attachments:

The first level is that of temptation of the living person by an aspect of the wanderer—not really an overwhelming compulsion but the thought or idea of doing or saying something that is contrary to the basic personality of the living individual—something out of character. The second level is called “influencing” or “shadowing” when the disembodied entity is affecting the host person mildly or intermittently, as with mood swings, irrational moments, sudden inexplicable fears or depressions. Third, when the entity is affecting the host’s personal feelings and habits more noticeably and frequently, the word “oppression” or “harassing” is used. Dr. Ireland-Frey said someone who is clair-

voyant might be able to see the entity attached to the host's aura or within it.

Obsession is next, and here Dr. Ireland-Frey's definition differs slightly from that of the Roman Catholic Church. She says it's a remarkably common condition in which the entity may invade not only the psyche but also the physical body of the host and meld its own personality traits and former bodily feelings with those of the host, often to the confusion and bewilderment of that person. The affected person may become aware of persistent pains, sudden changes in emotions unlike his or her normal feelings, unfamiliar attitudes, or even unnatural traits and talents.

And finally, "possession" is the condition wherein the invading entity takes over the body of the host completely, pushing out the host's own personality (soul) and expressing its own words, feelings, and behaviors through the host's body. Dr. Ireland-Frey says complete possession is rare, and can be spectacular when it happens. Sometimes it

may alternate with obsession. A case when a person suddenly goes berserk, for example, may be the result of sudden complete possession. She writes that she has personally seen only one case of complete possession.

If you suffer from any of the symptoms described above, I suggest you consult a psychologist, psychiatrist, or member of the Christian clergy with experience dealing with such issues. One whom I interviewed on my radio show a few years ago is Shakuntala Modi, M.D., a psychiatrist practicing in Wheeling, West Virginia and author of the book, *Remarkable Healings: A Psychiatrist Discovers Unsuspected Roots of Mental and Physical Illness*. Hopefully, however, all you suffer from are occasional negative thoughts. We all do at one time or another because things happen. As has been discussed, the best way to deal with them is to shoo them away by turning your mind to something positive. Don't get in an argument with your thoughts, especially if they come to you as voices. Push them

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

away, immediately. A hard and fast rule is never dwell on negative thoughts. They can take over and push you into depression, and no good can come of that. As Jesus said to Peter, “Get thee behind me Satan.” (Matthew 16:23)

Okay, so your negative thoughts are more than thoughts. Perhaps you hear voices occasionally, or even frequently. There is a way to get rid of them. Dr. Wilson Van Dusen (1923-2005), a psychologist at Mendocino State Hospital in California wrote in his book, *The Presence of Other Worlds*, that after dealing with hundreds of so-called mentally ill (psychotic and schizophrenic) patients, he discovered it was possible to speak to their hallucinations. To do so he looked for patients who could distinguish between their own thoughts and the things they heard and saw in the world of hallucinations.

A consistent finding was that these patients felt they had contact with another world or order of beings. The negative spirits of this other world inhabited his patients’ minds and were able to dredge up

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

memories of negative acts the individuals had done in order to torment them and cause them to become distraught. Apparently, these evil spirits want to create negative emotional states because they actually feed off them. In other words, they are energy parasites, and from their point of view, the more negative the energy, the better. When one doctor, a colleague of Van Dusen, attempted to explain this to his patients, the voices would become extremely noisy in an effort to drown out what was being said. The evil spirits didn't want their victims to know.

I could go on about this doctor's experience, but let me cut to the chase. Why do you suppose the evil spirits didn't want their victims to know what they were up to? Because they didn't want their victims to know they were actually separate entities—not part of their victims. That's because the best defense against evil spirits is the knowledge that you do not have to be influenced by them. You don't have to because they are unwanted guests—separate spiritual beings that want to take

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

advantage of you, and as spiritual, non-physical beings, they cannot hold a gun to your head or a knife to your throat. In other words, they are spiritual vampires with no teeth, parasites with no physical power that use words to generate negative emotions they can then drain from you. As my mother used to tell me when I was growing up, “Sticks and stones may break your bones but names and faces cannot hurt you.”

In other words, you do not have to allow them to have power over you. Rather, if you refuse to become distraught, if you use your will power to stay positive and do not allow negative emotions to take hold, you deny the spirits what they are after. Eventually, they will have no choice but to give up and move on. But let me tell you there is an even faster way. If you are a Christian, and even if you are not, you can say the Lord’s Prayer, or the Twenty-Third Psalm, and they will likely take off like a shot.

The same is true of negative thoughts in general. They are a lesser form of these evil entities,

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

and not part of you. Your higher self wants nothing but the best for you. As already stated several times, shoo those thoughts away. Do not argue or debate them. Dispense with them by turning your thoughts to that which is positive and uplifting.

Be Generous and Follow the Golden Rule

Let's return to the Law of Karma. Inherent in it is that the more you give, the more you will receive—that what you send out into the world will return to you. Therefore, the more you assist others, the more you assist yourself. This is not some theoretical, do-gooder idea. It will work in your day-to-day life provided your intention or motive is to express unconditional love without seeking or expecting anything in return.

You see, what you intend—your motivation—is more important than what you actually do. Here's an example: Two women received life readings from Edgar Cayce, each of whom had been a prostitute in her most recent past incarnation. One was experiencing a positive life—she was revered by many as a living saint. The other's life was not at all positive. People didn't trust her—they whispered behind her back that she must be some sort of floozy even though in her current life she had remained virtuous.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Edgar Cayce could tune into the Akashic Records while in trance—what in Christianity and Judaism is known as “The Book of Life” (Psalm 69:28)—and used the information to explain why. In her past life, the revered woman had used what she had to give comfort and love to lonely men. The troubled woman, on the other hand, had used what she had to enrich herself and had reviled her customers. Both had been practitioners of the world’s oldest profession, but each had done so with a different motive, and it was their motives that determined what returned to each.

Obviously, the universe knows what’s up, or to modify Abraham Lincoln’s famous quip, “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time—but you can never fool your higher self—ever.” You get back what you deserve based on your motives and intensions.

All well and good, you say, but what if giving and expressing unconditional love is not part of your nature? Here’s my advice: As I wrote before,

“Fake it until you feel it.” As you express unconditional love and see how it affects those who receive it, you will eventually come to enjoy giving it. As time goes by, your motive for giving it will change. You will do so because it makes you feel good.

I can sense someone reading this turning up his or her nose at the notion of loving some bum on the street, or a former enemy, or a member of the other political party. If that’s you, maybe your definition of love is what’s causing discomfort. Unconditional love is not romantic love. Romantic love, and love for your children or siblings, are feelings. When Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he wasn’t talking about changing how you feel about them, he was talking about changing your actions toward them. He was talking about the Golden Rule—treating them as you would have them treat you. The love Jesus was advocating is a verb, not a noun. It means accepting people as they are without judgment or expectations—the full acceptance of others without attempting to change them, except

perhaps by positive example. The law of unconditional love says, “If you go out of your way to express unconditional love, you automatically rise above fear, and, as you transcend your fears, you automatically open to the expression of unconditional love.”

Still not convinced? Someone at your office is despicable and mean to you? Being kind to them is going to be extremely difficult if not impossible, is that it? Let me say that I understand it won't be easy. I've been there, and having been there, I can assure you the first thing you must do is to forgive that person. Forgive him or her, forgive yourself, and forgive others. This doesn't mean rolling over and playing dead. If you are in an abusive relationship, get out of it. Get out of it and forgive the abuser. As long as you hold onto bitterness toward someone, bitterness will come back to you. Forgive. Pray for the one who has abused you. Pray that God's peace, serenity, and love will come to that person.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Let me tell you a true story that might help. Once I worked with a man who was the most unlovable person I have ever met. It was almost impossible to like him. He was mean, spiteful, and petty. I'd known him a while before I found myself working with him. By a series of what seemed coincidences, he became my partner in an advertising agency. He owned the largest share, more than fifty percent, and ultimately was able to call the shots. We disagreed at almost every turn.

About six months after we came together in business, I traveled to New York to visit with the editors of *Advertising Age* and *ADWEEK* and the ad columnist for the *New York Times* among others, in an effort to drum up publicity for our business. I had breakfast meetings, lunch meetings, after-work-drink meetings, and was dragged from one place to another by our publicist. All of this meeting and greeting gave me a splitting headache. I'm basically an introvert and had to be "on" the whole time—not my idea of fun. But I was doing what

needed to be done for the benefit of myself, my partner and our employees.

The morning I returned to my office in Virginia, I opened the *New York Times* to the business section and realized that lightning had struck. My picture was at the head of the advertising column. It must have been a very slow day for news in the ad game. Three-quarters of the text was devoted to our little upstart agency in Richmond. What a coup to be featured in the *Gray Lady* herself, where the presidents and ad managers of companies all over the United States would see us. Practically any ad agency owner would have given his first born for that kind of publicity. Reprints would be run off by the thousands and sent to every client prospect from Nova Scotia to Key West. I was ecstatic and certain my partner would be pleased.

But no, he was angry. His name wasn't mentioned in the article. How dare my name and photo appear in an article in the *New York Times* and his name not be mentioned? He was the creative direc-

tor, wasn't he? His name was on the door same as mine, wasn't it? He owned more stock, didn't he?

Wait a minute. I didn't write the story, I told him. Of course I'd talked about him in the interview. I'd sung his praises. The columnist and I had talked an hour. He had selected what he wanted to write about. A lot of what I'd said had found its way onto the cutting room floor.

That didn't matter. He was not included, and it was somehow my fault. Not only was he now even more impossible to live with than usual for the next week or two, I learned later that he actually had pulled our publicist into his office, shut the door, and rather than give her the pat on the back she deserved, had threatened to fire her if another story on the agency ever appeared without his name in it.

Needless to say, having this guy as a partner was no fun. It got so bad I began to dread coming to work. Perhaps he and I had Karma from a former life to work out, I don't know. I wasn't aware of such things then. But in retrospect, I believe we

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

would still have some to work out if I hadn't followed the course I recommend to you. I had recently learned that one of the things Jesus told people to do was to pray for their enemies. I knew this wouldn't be easy, but I thought at least I ought to try. So, I prayed for this guy. I meditated about him and his situation. I could see the disharmony and chaos inside. He was like a nerve ending dangling and exposed, ready to touch something, anything, and streak off like a heat seeking missile. I asked God to bring him comfort and peace. I prayed that his splintered soul would be healed and made whole. I asked God to come into his life, to slip into his heart and show him the way to peace and tranquility. Every time he upset me, I would pray this prayer at the first opportunity.

Something happened I hadn't expected. I found that these prayers helped me. I found that I no longer could feel animosity toward him. I couldn't harbor anger once I'd prayed for him. The anger melted. The burden lifted. I felt light, buoyant.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

This would have been reason enough to have done all that praying, but to my astonishment, it was not the only good that came about. Within two months, he called me into his office and announced he was retiring. To say I was surprised would be a gross understatement. He was only 54 and had never so much as hinted at the possibility.

Doctor's orders, he said. He'd had a heart attack a few years before, and a recent stress test had revealed new blockages had reformed. They were still at the point where they could be taken care of without high-risk surgery, but his doctor had advised him to get out of the business before it killed him. He had to slow down, take it easy, and get away from the stress.

I bought his share of the business. I paid more than I should, but that didn't matter. Suddenly, my working life was a pleasure again. My brother joined me in the business and we were able to build up the agency and sell it. Enough was generated to allow me to try my hand at writing full time, which

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

was something I'd always wanted to do. But the real kicker, the most amazing thing is, my former partner was able to do something he'd always wanted to, which was paint. Fine art was a passion he'd neglected in favor of the advertising business and the almighty dollar, and so he was able at last to devote time to his real purpose and "follow his bliss." (More about that in an upcoming discussion.) A feature article appeared in the paper about him a few years after he retired. He had achieved success in this new career. I imagine the blockages were a thing of the past. He certainly looked healthy. No doubt his stress level was down to almost zero, which means he had been led to the peace, tranquility, and dare I say the harmony I'd prayed he would find.

The lesson this man taught me is to forgive. You can do this, too, by praying for whomever you feel has wronged you. Pray that they will find whatever they need to make them whole. And when you do, what seems like a miracle may happen. Rather,

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

if you hold onto ill feelings, the animosity you harbor toward them will return to you as surely as a lead ball dropped from a tower will hit the ground.

Much good can come as a result of the law that what you give out will return to you, but keep in mind it also has a downside. If you spew hate, if you think negatively of someone, or send negative thoughts to them, the thoughts may harm the person, but in due course, they will return to you as surely as they were sent. The same is true of disharmonious deeds. Fortunately, the law works both ways, and positive thoughts, words, and deeds will return to the sender as well.

Let this be a word to the wise.

Be Truthful to Yourself and Others

Our beliefs can be erroneous, yet holding onto them even so can nonetheless be comforting. They give us the feeling we have things figured out—and not having things figured out creates fear. Unfortunately, what we think is true isn't always, and yet those of us who have strong beliefs usually are not easily swayed. This has been demonstrated through research conducted by a man named Drew Westen, a professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Emory University in Atlanta.

Dr. Westen studied how people think, particularly in the area of politics. Using MRI scans, he has demonstrated that persons with partisan preferences believe what they want to believe regardless of the facts. Not only that, they unconsciously congratulate themselves—the reward centers of their brains light up—when they reject new information that does not square with their predetermined views.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

In one test conducted a dozen years ago during the 2004 election, subjects were presented with contradictory statements made by George Bush and John Kerry. Republicans judged Kerry's flip-flop harshly, while letting Bush off the hook for his. Democrats did the reverse. Interestingly, brain scans showed that the parts of the brain accounting for emotion were far more active during the experiment than the reasoning parts. This is why your Mama told you not to bring up politics or religion at a cocktail party attended by people whose beliefs and leanings you don't know.

Anyone who follows politics will not be surprised by Dr. Westen's findings. The truth is, his research does not relate anything new. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), a Russian novelist, historian, short story writer, and outspoken critic of the Soviet Union, characterized this phenomenon as "the desire not to know." In 1915, the philosopher, poet, and novelist George Santayana (1863-1953) acknowledged in a letter to his sister that

“when I read [newspapers] I form perhaps a new opinion of the newspaper but seldom a new opinion on the subject discussed.” Westen’s research has value because it backs up impressions with empirical facts—brain scans.

In another experiment Westen conducted before the same presidential election, participants were told a soldier at Abu Ghraib was charged with torturing prisoners and wanted to subpoena Bush administration officials. Different participants were given different amounts of evidence supporting the soldier’s claim that he had been told the administration had suspended Geneva Convention rules regarding treatment of prisoners. But it didn’t matter how much information they had.

Westen said, “Eight-four percent of the time, we could predict whether people believed the evidence was sufficient to subpoena Donald Rumsfeld based on just three things: the extent to which they liked Republicans, the extent to which they liked human rights groups like Amnesty International, and the extent to which they liked the U.S. military.”

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Whether you realize it or not, you have a belief system. We all do. You might compare one to stack of cans like you might see in a grocery store, containing peas or soup that forms a pyramid. Each can represents an individual belief. All are in place and fit together to form a worldview, a sort of system that makes sense because everything belongs where it is and holds the other cans in place. But what happens if hard evidence turns up that refutes one of your beliefs, especially one of the key supports near the bottom? Suppose if you remove that can, the whole stack will come tumbling down?

If you're honest with yourself, that can of peas will have to go, even though you may be left with a mess. If you are a seeker of truth and harmony—if you want to graduate from earth school—you will have to remove an erroneous belief even though your pyramid may have to be reconstructed from the ground up. It's a fact that the truth can set you free, and it's a fact that denying the truth and failing to recognize and accept it—as well as lead-

ing others astray in the process—will inevitably create disharmony and problematic circumstances. On top of this, if you refuse to deal with a highly emotional issue, or refuse to take responsibility for an unpleasant situation, you are setting up circumstances that will eventually lead to an unpleasant outcome. Such an outcome can be put off for lifetimes, but the effect will be experienced in the meantime—mentally, physically, or as a lifestyle manifestation until you correctly balance the situation and restore harmony.

There are triggers to look out for that will help you recognize the truth when it comes knocking at your door. In Matthew 7:3, Jesus says, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (NIV Translation) Jesus knew the traits you respond to in others, are those you also have, both positive and negative. This has four primary manifestations:

That which you admire in others, exists in you;

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

That which you resist and react to strongly in others is sure to be found within you as well;

That which you resist and react to in others is something you are afraid exists within you; and,

That which you dislike in yourself, you will dislike in others.

One of the reasons you are enrolled in Earth School is to rise above the effects of fear. Those fears are reflected in your reactions to others. What you need to do should be obvious. Open up to the truth, recognize it, let go of fear, and express unconditional love to others who are part of your life.

A related phenomenon is known as The Law of Dissonance. It says you will experience mental discomfort and create disharmony within yourself when you hold two conflicting beliefs, or when your actions don't agree with your beliefs. For example, you may believe smoking is bad for your health, and yet you smoke. When beliefs and actions are incompatible, you will attempt to reduce your discomfort by changing either your actions,

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

or your beliefs. As a result, you will either become a non-smoker, or you will deny or rationalize the health threat.

If you believe something to be, it becomes truth for you. Therefore, be careful what you accept as true for it will influence all aspects of your life and your future.

Always Have and Pursue a Challenge

Earlier, we saw that the reality we inhabit is constructed of opposites—yin and yang, good and evil, and so forth because without the tension this creates everything would fall apart. As a natural consequence of this, that which is totally successful tends to destroy itself. Most of us know this subconsciously, which is why we do not allow our relationships or careers to become totally successful. We realize that if we achieve that pinnacle, we greatly increase the potential for self-destruction.

For example, consider a couple that struggles through a number of adversities, such as getting the husband through medical school, sickness, a badly timed pregnancy, financial problems, and family troubles. Eventually, the couple arrives at a point when everything is going well. What happens? They get divorced.

A spiritual seeker who is making profound progress will often reach a point when he or she

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

backslides and behaves negatively. The fall of cult and religious leaders and TV evangelists are cases in point. A successful business executive who has made it to the top of his or her profession often will have a mid-life identity crisis or nervous breakdown and destroy it all. Someone who inherits wealth or wins the lottery may destroy him or herself through dissipation.

In each of these examples, when total success was obtained, there was no more challenge, and destruction followed. The falls were brought about by a lack of harmony, caused by relaxed tension, coupled with the subconscious desire to experience the challenge again.

The bottom line reality is that unless a person continues to be challenged, he or she will stagnate. How many times have we seen someone who was healthy and active all his or her life retire and then quickly go downhill?

Yin and yang need to stay in balance. As previously noted, there is nothing truly solid in the uni-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

verse. It is rapidly vibrating energy. When Einstein discovered that “matter is energy” he opened the door to merging science and metaphysics.

Scientists have proven that energy cannot die, it can only transform (reincarnate). You are energy. Your skin, which appears solid, is actually trillions of swiftly moving molecules orbiting each other at a specific rate of vibration. This vibrating mass must by its very nature keep moving—either forward or backward. In light of this, do not hold back. Attain total success but do not allow complacency to set in. This can be done by always seeking new challenges and realizing that without one, self-destruction will result. By keeping success and challenge in balance, it will be possible to maintain your position and retain success. In other words, always have a challenge you are striving to accomplish, but make it one that minimizes the downside risk while simultaneously fulfilling the need for yin-yang balance. This can often be accomplished through wisely calculated risk taking.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

It can also be comforting to know there can be no growth without at least some discontent. Deep within you, at the level of your higher self, you know what is best for you. There is an urge built in to you pushes you to strive for more awareness. Suffice it to say, you ought never allow yourself to reach a level of self-satisfaction where there is an absence of challenge. For most of us, growth will not continue without some agitation and discontent. So study your dissatisfactions, for they will tell you what you are about to leave behind and possibly point you in a new direction.

Inevitably, in everyone's life there will be turning points—a break in the energy wave patterns and a complete change. Everything will be affected by this change in flux, some things to a lesser degree than others. Examples include: 1) a tragedy such as the death of a loved one; 2) a religious conversion; 3) a point in therapy when something clicks and from that time on you begin to get well; 4) a mother giving birth to a baby. For me, it was

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

when I realized I'd gone stale in my career. I began having a recurring vision of myself coming around the track again and again. You might call it daily *déjà vu*. I'd excelled in my career—was president of my own advertising agency. I was pulling down a salary well into six figures, was listed in *Who's Who in the Media and Communications*. I had accomplished what our society and our educational system seems to indicate ought to be the primary goal of life and the one true way to happiness and fulfillment. I'd picked a profession and risen to the top. And as many who reach such rarefied air also have found, it wasn't all it had been cracked up to be.

Don't get me wrong. I love the creative process, and being creative is what advertising is all about. After a few years, I began doing some marketing communications work again. But when you are successful, and this is true in many other lines of work, after a certain point you no longer do what made you successful. You end up supervising others who get to have all the fun, while you get the

headaches. That's why I've arranged my advertising and marketing activities today so that I get to do the fun part, which is working with clients and actually doing the work. That, and the ongoing need to pay my bills, creates more than sufficient tension to keep things in balance.

That's today. Back then, there was something else I'd always wanted to do, and it started calling to me. I since have found that when you want something, and remain attentive, an opportunity will appear. Joseph Campbell (1904-1983) labeled this opportunity "The call to adventure." This call will come whether your desire is at a conscious level, or whether it's hidden in your subconscious mind. You'll be presented with a choice. You can follow your adventure and gain from it. Or you can refuse the call, in which case you will stagnate and eventually die—figuratively, or perhaps even literally. Ignoring the call is the cause of much ill health that's hidden beneath our noses. Your higher self often will use the two by four of a health crisis to

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

get your attention, which prompts a word to the wise: To accept the call to adventure is to choose life over old age and death. Myths of all cultures recount the same tale, each in its own cultural guise. This is not surprising since the call to adventure is something each of us receives, often many times during a lifetime. We are compelled to leave the safety and security of our home base and venture into the unknown where inevitable dragons and demons of one kind or another must be faced and overcome. Supported by unseen or supernatural powers, the hero who pushes forward will invariably succeed, later to return to his or her home territory more highly evolved than when he or she left, and in possession of a new level of understanding. As we have been discussing, the purpose of life is growth and evolution. You need not take my word for this. Warnings can be found in myths throughout the ages. Refusal converts what otherwise would be positive and constructive into negative form. The would-be hero loses the power of

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

action and becomes instead a victim bound by boredom, hard work, or even imprisonment, as is often the case at least figuratively with many executives and professionals today.

This leads to the final very important piece of advice, which is coming up now.

Follow Your Bliss

Whether or not you have heard of “The Call to Adventure,” you likely know more about it than you realize. That’s because it is the underlying plot skeleton of most successful novels and films. A sympathetic lead character finds him or herself in trouble of one kind or other, and like Dorothy when she landed in Oz, she must step out of her ordinary world—literally or figuratively—into a new, often unfamiliar and frightening situation or world where she must try her best to solve the problem and before she can return home. Each effort, however, gets our hero deeper into trouble, and each new obstacle in her path appears larger than the last. Finally, when things look blackest, and it seems certain that our hero is finished, she manages to get out of trouble through her own efforts, intelligence, or ingenuity. No cavalry to the rescue is allowed. That would ruin the story for those reading or watching.

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Obviously there are as many ways to put flesh on this skeleton as there are novels on the shelves at Barnes & Noble. But whether the problem the hero must face and overcome is physical, emotional, financial, or otherwise, the structure is pretty much the same. I believe the reason we typically find such stories compelling is that it's the story of each of us. Our ordinary world is non-physical reality. Physical reality—this earth—is not our home. We come here to fight battles, to conquer new challenges, and to rise to a higher level of understanding just as Dorothy did while in the Land of Oz.

Returning to my personal story, there I was, tired of the ad game and ready to move to a higher plane, but held in place by golden handcuffs. I was ripe for the call, and naturally it came. It was not easy to turn away from that earthly treasure, but I did. I started writing. And I loved it.

Like any hero's adventure, it was frightening to take that first step, to answer the call, and the adventure became even more frightening as it contin-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

ued. Soon more money was going out than coming in. I had to dip into savings in a big way. I won't bore you with a detailed account of sleepless nights and years of pinching pennies. Let it be sufficient to say I had to fight my own dragons and demons and to confront the fears that told me I ought to get my nose pressed back against the grindstone of the workaday world. But, as in any hero's adventure, when the going got really tough, unseen hands—the support of the divine—stepped in.

Today, I am most surely on a higher plane of understanding mentally and spiritually. Nevertheless, don't be misled, I have plenty of tension in my life. I am not better off financially—still must juggle the bills and worry how I'm going to get the roof repaired. But in an intangible, non-worldly way, I feel wealthier than I ever did before.

As a result of what I have learned from personal experience and from 40 years studying metaphysics and searching for the truth about life, my advice is to follow your bliss. This is the advice the mythol-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

ogist, writer and lecturer Joseph Campbell repeatedly gave his students at Sarah Lawrence College. Whether you are just starting out, or at a turning point, it seems to me it's what you ought to do in an effort to reach your full potential in this lifetime.

Your conscious mind is a mind within a mind. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) observed that specific events and the meeting of individuals, which seemed at the time to have come about by chance, later in a person's life turn out to have been essential components in a constant story line. Schopenhauer said that it is as though one dreamer were dreaming a giant dream in which each of the dream's characters has his own individual dream. I believe, however, that it's not so much that individual dreamers coordinate with each other. In truth, there's only one dreamer and one mind. Individual minds, yours and mine included, are part of it—just as radio shows are all part of a single band of frequency. Each dreamer might be thought of as an individual cell

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

that is part of the whole. Each has a conscious mind, and each as a unique subconscious mind. But these merge into a collective mind, the Infinite Mind we all share—saint or sinner, murderer, Sunday school teacher, Ted Bundy, Buddha, or Vishnu.

We each have free will and can do things that bring pain and suffering to others and ourselves. But the Infinite Mind will almost always have subsequent events work out so that at least some good will come from our ill-advised deeds. As the Apostle Paul said, “In all things God works for the good of those who love Him.” (Romans 8:28) Coordination happens effortlessly for the good of all toward the end goal of life in physical form: the evolution of humankind to ever-higher levels. The goal is for us to become co-creators—creators in cooperation with the Infinite Mind. We hear the same idea expressed in a different way when people speak about God having an overall plan that we cannot possibly understand, and that, “He works in mysterious ways.”

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

Many I have interviewed believe that on the other side, in spirit, we chose the time and place of our births, and in so doing, we determine the direction and the experiences of each life that are likely. We make many decisions about the lifetime we will be entering into. We chose our parents, we choose other souls to interact with, and some say we select the astrological configurations of our birth, which determine character, personality, abilities, restrictions, and the timing for strengths and weaknesses. If all of this seems too complicated and far out to be possible, it helps to realize our minds are part of and extensions of the Infinite Mind, which means estimates by today's experts that we use only about ten percent of our mind power are probably extremely conservative.

And something else: Each one of us has a guiding principle within that metaphysicians call Dharma, a Sanskrit word meaning "statute" or "law." Dharma is the law that orders the universe and the essential nature or function of a person or

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

a thing. It is what we have to give or to share with others, which means that even though we may be good at something, we are not fulfilling our Dharma if we are primarily after acclaim or money.

I once had Dharma explained to me this way by an accomplished metaphysician whom I respect. She said, “Dharma is your soul’s urge. When you are responding to your Dharma, you feel at peace. Someday, after you grow old and look back at life, you will regard the time you spent putting your Dharma to work as the golden years. This is because people who are using their Dharma are passionate about what they do, as though it were a flame burning in them. They lose track of time. They’re in the flow. And something else. Each person applies his or her Dharma in a way that is unique. It is as though each of us is one piece of a giant jigsaw puzzle, and we fit together to make up a whole.”

Dharma has directed your past and present life experiences, always urging you to forge ahead into

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

activities and situations that will help form the character and the knowledge needed to fulfill your destiny. Of course, you have free will and do not have to fulfill your Dharma. But if you listen to inner direction, it will direct you to do so. The Dharmic direction each person receives is right for that person and is likely to fall into one of seven directions:

One is work force. This path includes the majority of general occupations, including homemakers.

Two is military. This includes soldiers and police.

Three is service, which includes religious workers, medical, social services, counselors, and practicing metaphysicians.

Four is creativity and includes artists, writers, poets, actors and entertainers.

Five is science, which includes medical researchers, engineers, and technologists.

Six is philosophy, including all who present theories about why humans do what they do.

Seven is government and includes government

leaders from president down through all areas of elected office.

Perhaps you are at a turning point and have decided to pursue your bliss, which will have you putting your Dharma to work. If so, it is time to let go of anything that is no longer useful or purposeful without regrets or resentment. This includes books, philosophy, clothing, beliefs, your lifestyle, even club memberships. Pleasure should be in the moment of the experience, and when something is no longer useful, by letting it go you free yourself to begin a new learning experience without being bound by the old.

As you contemplate your future course, it is also important to realize you can only attract that which you feel worthy of. Self-esteem is critical to success. The truth is you are not what you have, and you are not what you do. Beneath your fear programming, you are perfect—an enlightened soul, fully self-actualized and a living example of unconditional love. It is only lifetimes of fear pro-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

gramming that prevent you from acknowledging who you really are. The more you can let go of the fears, the higher your self esteem will be, and the more options you will have and more risks you can take. The more you like yourself, the more others will like you, and the more worthy you will feel.

You can have anything you want if you can give up the belief you cannot have it—assuming what you want does not conflict with someone else's belief. If, for example, you desire a fulfilling, one-to-one relationship, but demand it to be with a particular person, you are not operating in harmony with the universe. Another example is in the area of accomplishment. You must get the education necessary to create what you want. “Where your attention goes, your energy flows.” You attract what you are and that which you concentrate upon. If you are negative, you draw in and experience negativity. If you are loving, you draw in and experience love. You can attract to you only those qualities you possess. So, if you want peace and

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

harmony in your life, you must become peaceful and harmonious.

Something else to understand is that a stronger emotion will always dominate a weaker one. Every idea you perceive is the beginning of a manifestation—although all ideas are not expressed in reality. It does not matter which idea you consciously favor, even know to be desirable, the stronger emotion will nullify the weaker ones, and the strongest emotion will begin to permeate all aspects of your activities. For example, if you are emotionally focused on the sexual desirability of a particular person, you may begin to create circumstances that will increase the likelihood of an eventual sexual union.

It is also important to realize that new information entering your mind destroys previous information of a similar nature. Once a pathway of information has been established in you, that viewpoint will prevail unless new information comes in to replace and destroy it. Let's say you fall off and get hurt while horseback riding. That may be the

end of your experience with horses because you will have been programmed negatively about horseback riding. This is why instructors always urge new riders to climb back aboard immediately. You need new input to erase the trauma of the fall.

The mind is engaged in an endless state of growth and reorganization. As a result, it is possible to reprogram yourself. This can be done, for example, by repeatedly listening to success-meditation recordings, or with visualization techniques. If you feel anxiety in crowds, imagine yourself relaxed in a crowd of people. When you fear doing something, and yet have the courage to do it anyway, you will soon do a mental flip-flop and may even become addicted to doing it. Here is a case in point. Suppose you fear skydiving, or skiing straight down a steep mountain. If you force yourself to do so anyway, the experience will release endorphins, which are produced by the central nervous system and the pituitary gland and can produce a feeling of euphoria very similar to that produced by opiates. The result

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

can be that you become somewhat addicted to skiing straight down mountains and skydiving.

Finally, when considering your new challenge, you may want to consider whether it is something you will do alone, or if it can be more readily accomplished in cooperation with others. When two or more people of similar vibration are gathered for a shared purpose, their combined energy directed toward the attainment of that purpose is doubled, tripled, quadrupled or more. Covens, esoteric religions, healing groups, and even worldwide meditations for world peace have used this phenomenon. The prolific author of personal-success literature, Napoleon Hill (1883-1970) called attention to it in his perennial bestseller, *Think, and Grow Rich*.

You have within yourself everything required to make your earthly incarnation a virtual paradise if you choose to accept that which is your divine birthright. We live in a universe of abundance, although the majority of humans populating our planet appear to view it as a universe of scarcity.

A Few More Thoughts & Truths

What else can you do to create a happier life for yourself? Here are a few suggestions:

Take five minutes, twice a day to affirm your goals, dreams, and desires. Most of us do not achieve our goals, not because we are too lazy or untalented, but because we forget about them and focus our efforts elsewhere.

Spend some time in nature. Even if it is for just ten minutes a day, take the time to go for a short walk or sit in a place surrounded by nature. Release the stress of the day by communing with God's creation, and you will soon feel recharged.

Exercise. Your body is your temple. Take care of your temple every day. If your body is not in top form, neither will you be. Exercising, eating healthy and taking care of your amazing vehicle in this reality is a requirement for you to be able to produce at the highest levels.

Meditate. The biggest improvements in our

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

lives come from within. An effective way to release the limiting beliefs and destructive thoughts that may plague you is to meditate for thirty minutes a day. Among the many benefits, meditation teaches you focus, and the success of opening to the transcendental part of yourself is strongly affected by your ability to focus. Regular practice of meditation has been scientifically proven to change your brain chemistry, lower blood pressure, make you sleep better, feel less stressed and more.

Smile a lot. A smile can change the world. Not only for you but also for the people you interact with. Practice a genuine smile and give joy to the world. Impact the world today by smiling at everyone around you.

Find more ways to have fun. Life does not have to be a strict, gloomy experience we struggle through. Instead it can be full of amazing twists and turns. Think of it as an adventure because that's what it really is. Approach it as such.

Make sure you laugh out loud at least once a

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

day. Do something stupid, childish, and completely weird. Be yourself, have fun, laugh at your own jokes.

Remember that we are all part of one mind, a great energy gestalt, and we are connected at the level of the collective unconsciousness. On a higher self or psychic level, it is possible for anyone to tune in to anyone else and to draw upon the entire gestalt. Humankind takes advancing steps when group consciousness reaches critical mass and new awareness is accepted by the whole.

Remember that everything begins as a thought or idea. Ideas and experiences create beliefs that in turn, create your reality. If you are unhappy with your current reality, you must change your beliefs and your behavior. Beliefs should be changed when you recognize which ones are not working for you. Change that belief, and your life will change.

With respect to changing your behavior, you must first decide the disharmonious behavior you

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

need to eliminate. Then realize you don't have to change how you feel about it, you simply have to change what you are doing. The Buddha knew what he was talking about when he said, "It is your resistance to what is that causes your suffering." By suffering, he meant everything that doesn't work in your life. This might include relationship problems, loss of loved ones, loneliness, sickness, accidents, guilt, financial hardship, unfulfilled desires, and so on. When you accept what you cannot change, you will be in position to set it aside and stop worrying about it. Like it or not, facts are facts, pure and simple. They exist, and no matter how much you resist them, there is nothing you can do about many of them. So let go. Stop holding on.

Yes, you absolutely should change what you can change—no doubt about it. But you also need to have the wisdom to accept what you cannot change. Out of acceptance will come detachment. This will enable you to enjoy the positive aspects of life without being distraction by the negative. Why waste

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

energy focusing on things from the past when you can move on and put those things behind you?

Everyone on Earth shares the goal of soul evolution whether or not he or she realizes it. We have incarnated in order to evolve spiritually. By rising above our fear-based emotions, and by learning how to express unconditional love, we raise our vibration rate, and move closer to a state of harmony. Even when it appears we are not evolving, we are making progress. We learn through the pain our disharmonious acts generate. We learn from our mistakes and our failures. If you fell off a bicycle nine times before you learned to ride it on the tenth try, you needed nine failures in order to achieve success. Thomas Edison conducted 10,000 experiments before he found a way to make an incandescent light bulb that worked. When asked how it felt to fail 10,000 times, he replied, "I didn't fail. I found 10,000 ways not to make a light bulb." In reality, every failure was a small success bringing him closer to accomplishing his goal. The same is

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

true of soul evolution. Each lifetime on Earth usually has a particular purpose. It may be to learn a specific lesson. It may be to help others in some way. Some of us have missions we agreed to before we incarnated. When that is the case, the circumstances of our lives will support the pursuit and the accomplishment of that mission.

You and you alone are responsible for everything that happens to you. All is a result of your past thoughts, words, and deeds, which have formed your present attitude. Your attitude toward life and your experiences are returned to you as love and joy, or as confusion, trouble, and heartbreaking experiences. These karmic rewards and punishments can be delivered immediately, at a later date in your present life, or in a future incarnation. The way to mitigate the punishments is to grow in wisdom and to seek harmony in all that you do.

Life is the dream of God. You are a character in the dream and have a role to play. Before you arrived on this earth, you may have vowed to accom-

You Can Be Happy, No Joke

plish a goal. You can either make good, or you can welsh. If you welsh, you will view the ramifications when the time comes for your life to be replayed before you, your judges, and your guides in the after-life. Yes, it's true. Everyone gets a life review when they pass over and can judge for themselves how well or how poorly they performed. Perhaps you will have grown to the point you can advance. If not, take heart, it will probably not be the first time, and certainly will not be the end of the world. You will have another opportunity to get things right—just like the character in *Groundhog Day*.

About the Author

Steve Martin, who also writes under the name his mother used when he had done something wrong, Stephen Hawley Martin, is a professional writer and the only three-time winner of the *Writer's Digest* Book Award, having won first prize twice for fiction and once for nonfiction. He also has won a first prize for visionary fiction from *Independent Publisher* and a first prize for nonfiction from *USA Book News*. He has written and ghostwritten 17 published books and is a former principal of the world-renowned advertising agency, The Martin Agency (GEICO is a well-known client), which in 2009 *ADWEEK* magazine named the premier advertising agency in the USA. Aside from ghostwriting and creating communications campaigns for a handful of clients through his firm, Hawley Martin Partners, he is the Editor and Publisher of Oaklea Press. Steve is looking for a few good books to publish. If you have one you would like for him to consider, contact Steve at shmartin@shmartin.com.