

tradition, *first in ourselves*, we would open the door to something entirely new, including authentic love and peace.

#### SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING POINTS IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Study esoteric ideas as the good news they are.
2. Do not hesitate to abandon useless procedures.
3. Inner power is as close as your own mind.
4. What you seek is now within you.
5. You can become a totally new person.
6. Accepted humiliation is a never-failing teacher.
7. Cosmic riches are for all who want them.
8. Make esotericism a daily experience.
9. With new insight, you can belong to yourself.
10. Genuine love and peace come with inward newness of spirit.

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# The Inner Perceptive Way to Solve Painful Problems of Living

Problems exist in a conditioned mind—which is a faulty mind—and nowhere else.

You wonder about it? Let us examine it.

You failed to get what you wanted, so now you have a problem, a conflict, a frustration. What was it you failed to get? A new friend, a reward, an honor, a sale? Maybe you failed to persuade someone to go along with you, or maybe you missed in your attempt to influence an event to satisfy your desire. Whatever it was, you failed to get what you wanted, and so the pain arose.

Why did it not pain your neighbor? Why is he free of your problem?

Because he did not falsely value it as you did. He will be pained by his own conditioned values, but he may think you are quite foolish for wanting that scheming woman or that hypocritical man or that fickle friend. He is blissfully free of your painful problem because he did not attribute false value to it in the first place.

Would you like more evidence? Something closer to home? Think of that person or event which caused you so much grief a day or month or year ago. Where is the grief now? Do you begin to see?

If you do not have false values you cannot have false problems. Yes, the problems themselves are false, for they come from

a faulty mind, just as flat loaves of bread come from a faulty oven.

Where are we? Right back where we started. Get rid of our wrong ways of thinking through intelligent work, and problems no longer exist. You can perform all sorts of mental magic like this as you advance in esoteric wisdom.

There is something entirely different about you which you hardly suspect. It is something of enormous value. This book points out the need for first seeing that something is seriously wrong with us, for example, that we live for foolish acquisitions. However, once that is accomplished, we come to the truth. We taste new powers for true happiness.

#### HOW ONE MAN CONQUERED HIS PROBLEMS

Carl J. stated his problem like this: "I envied ambitious and successful people, and wondered why I could not be like them. I thought something was wrong with me because I had not achieved very much. In spite of every effort I made, nothing turned out right. I worked, studied, planned, did everything you are supposed to do in order to reach the top. Nothing happened, except more envy and discouragement on my part.

"Then," Carl continued, "I came across some of the ideas that you, Mr. Howard, have been teaching. I confess I did not understand your books at first, but there was a certain fascination about the ideas that I could not dismiss from my mind. I would set your books aside, only to be mysteriously drawn back to them. I now know what was going on. I was at the point in my life where I wanted, above all else, to know what life was really all about. And I was willing to start a patient and persistent search.

"The answers came. Not all at once, for I had much thicker fog in my mind than I had supposed. For the first time I saw how little I understood. What a mass of false assumptions pressed me down! It was somewhat humiliating, but what relief to toss aside my pretense of wisdom. Finally, I broke through the nagging problem that had started my search in the first place. I saw clearly that the so-called successful men whom I had envied were total failures in obtaining happiness of life. What I had assumed was admirable ambition was nothing more than nervous com-

pulsion. They could not have stopped their chasing if their lives depended upon it. And no sooner did they achieve one goal than they were driven to chase another.

"That, Mr. Howard, is no way to live. At last I see. Now, I place self-command first of all, not the nervous pursuit of what can never satisfy. Oh, I still have lots of discoveries to make; I realize that. But I have broken through, and I'll never go back to the old, miserable ways. Envy is no longer a torment. The pain is gone forever. So now I am stepping forward to new conquests; the only kind with real meaning."

#### YOU CAN COMMAND YOUR OWN LIFE

Suppose someone handed you a number of disks of glass, each the size of a saucer. Across the surface of each was printed a word—*Fear, Tension, Dejection, Sorrow*. The person handing you the disks appeared to be strong and authoritative, so you listened timidly as he instructed, "You must look at life through these disks of glass, while reacting according to the words printed on them. For example, if you see an event through the glass of *Tension*, you must respond to it with tension. Whatever the word dictates, you must automatically obey."

Assuming that this is the only way to live, you meekly follow orders. You see life through one glass after another, reacting according to the negative words. As unhappy as it makes you, you feel compelled to continue. Even when the so-called authority goes away, the negative habit continues automatically.

But one day you get tired of unhappiness. You smash the glasses. Great day! All is well! You realize that when events are seen through the eyes of reality, they are not frightening in themselves. Fear arose only because you saw things in the wrong way. The events were not negative—*you* were negative. But now you know better, and all is truly right.

Men and women, in their mechanical reactions to life, are unaware that they see life through the dictatorial glasses of falsehood. Not one man in a thousand will believe the enlightened teachers who try to explain the error. But the person who truly wishes to smash out, can do so.

That is why this book was written. I am attempting to smash the habitual glasses which make us see things with distortion, for that is what makes us right at last.

Here are some questions from one inquirer:

Q. My problem is daily pressure.

A. If you will accept pressure, when others refuse it, you will be the one who is forever free of pressure. No man ever won a contest by refusing it. Pressure exists only in an unenlightened mind.

Q. How can we break harmful habits?

A. Habits are unconscious and mechanical, so you must make them conscious. If you have the habit of nervous haste, deliberately move slowly. This makes you uncomfortable, which forces you to observe the habit. With full awareness, it falls away.

Q. I am bursting with a hundred questions!

A. By enduring the tension of your questions, and not escaping through shallow comforts, the questions themselves will disappear, along with their tension.

#### HOW BLUNDERS CAN TURN INTO ADVANCEMENTS

Lucy W. complained, "I want people to stop bothering me. It seems as if everyone pours their gripes onto me."

With insight, Lucy can free herself of this particular people-problem. She must see that the people in her private life are there because she asked for them in one way or another. With this insight she will cease to attract new problem-people. Along with this she must see through her own false needs for the company of problem-people. Yes, her own false needs attract them. Weakness attracts weakness, for each hopes to get something from the other. Fresh psychic strength is the answer. This means that Lucy must willingly enter her loneliness, for once others see that they cannot get anything from her, they will depart. But on the other side of this voluntary loneliness is understanding, where loneliness is impossible.

"I know this doesn't mean I must become a hermit," Lucy commented.

"No, it means to be in the social sea like a strong ship which cannot be sunk by the lashing waves."

A man may attend a thousand meetings where the topics of truth and reality and insight are discussed, but do you know what the problem is? He comes out of a meeting the very same person he was before. Nothing has changed internally.

To change, he must voluntarily release everything requiring change. If a cake of ice is brought close to a fire, it takes time to melt and warm up its water. If snow is brought, it takes less time. If water is brought close to a fire, it warms up at once. The less fixed and hard we are, the faster we warm to the light of truth.

The way is clear enough. Do we want to walk it? That is the only question. What is the way? It is to:

Remember the necessity of waking up.  
Use all happenings for self-illumination.  
Refuse false and shallow comfort.  
Seek first the inner kingdom.

Be neither surprised nor dismayed by your hundreds of blunders along the way. Walk on. Remember that *conscious blunders* are advancements. This means to sense the wrongness of an act or attitude, even while doing it.

And have no concern for the many things not understood as yet. Attend only to your very next step, giving it all your attention, whether it be reading for knowledge or reflecting for understanding.

#### HOW TO BE FREE OF DAMAGING IDEAS

Man is born with the capacity for illusion, which would not be so bad if it were not for another negative factor. From the day of his birth he is bombarded by deluded adults who were themselves bombarded by their elders. So the sickness continues from one generation to another. But whoever really wants the cure can have it.

Reality constantly tries to tell us what is right, but the tricky mind distorts the message. It is like a man visiting a foreign country who asks a policeman for directions to an historic site. An

interpreter comes along who offers to translate the policeman's directions for the visitor. But the interpreter stupidly and carelessly twists everything the policeman says. Not realizing what has happened, the visitor goes astray.

What are the false informations passed along by a confused mind? There are thousands of distorting messages, for instance, it is false that:

- Other human beings have real power over you.
- We can escape the penalty for self-deception.
- The past has a hold on your present.
- Self-reliance can be successfully avoided.
- Anything can prevent your supreme psychic success.

Continual attention to the psychic task at hand provides new power for self-clarity. A small child toddling across the room is distracted by a bit of colored paper or by his own shoes. The mind must concentrate its energies on the valuable journey, not on trivial distractions.

To the same degree that one is clogged to the reception of true life, one will also be clogged to the exit of false life. This means that your receptivity to the flow of spiritual and mental health will also enable you to let go of unhealthiness.

Man's complaints about the way life treats him have no justification. He is like a man who insists upon sitting in the dark, while grumbling that he cannot understand an open book before him. The opportunity to understand the truth and to profit from it must be earned by right effort, by turning on the light.

The only evil in any situation is that you have not as yet conquered it through self-conquest.

#### ✓ SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY

Why should you mind if you can't find anything to do, if no one wants you, if nothing comes your way? Why should you mind the blankness? What is wrong with blankness? In your misunderstanding, you assume it represents the end of the world. However, if you would make it welcome, you would see it truly as the gate to a fantastically new world.

Take the question of security. Security is present when we have abandoned all need for security. People assume that the various anchors to which they attach themselves will prevent harmful drifting, but they don't see that the very anchors they depend upon are the weights preventing spontaneous motion. Life is motion, but it is not our personal motion. We do not move life; it moves us. As we voluntarily join the cosmic flow, we are in harmony, and therefore safe and happy.

Two men journeyed in the dark with a single lantern between them. Coming to a fork in the road, the owner of the lantern turned left, while the other hesitantly faced to the right. The man with the lantern advised his companion, "Go back for your own lantern, for then you will be fearless."

To understand something means to know it *all by yourself*.

Let's take a perfect example of how esoteric understanding sets you free from painful problems. Whenever you decide to abandon false notions, a sense of guilt arises. This guilt is absolutely false, so you must ignore it and plunge ahead. All false ideas and false systems cruelly try to keep you a slave by making you feel guilty. As if you should feel guilty over abandoning poisoned water! As you persist with your understanding, guilt gradually loses its grip and finally falls away.

If you ever feel that esoteric facts are undermining your old beliefs, I am very glad for you. This is an essential and a progressive step.

Here are questions asked at one of my lectures:

Q. Some parts of me are actively attracted to esoteric ideas, but other parts are indifferent. What can be done with the lazy ones?

A. Just be aware of them and continue to work.

Q. Do I really have a choice in life, or not? Some teachings say yes, others say no.

A. You have the choice to drop the false assumption that you presently have choice. By penetrating this esoteric mystery you will see that there is no difference between your choice and that of God, Truth, Nature, call it what you like. You and Life are One, which is peace.

Q. I am applying esoteric principles to a bad habit of mine. How can I know if I am making progress?

A. When you cease to wonder about progress. Your wondering is a form of anxiety, and where anxiety exists, there is not the necessary understanding.

#### A WONDER-WORKING STATEMENT TO MAKE

Remarked Randy J., who was attending my lectures, "I see what you mean when you describe human beings as hypnotized. I have friends who don't see the slightest connection between their mental viewpoints and their muddled lives. I'm not being self-righteous, either; I know how long I fought the principles we are learning at these lectures. What can be done to lower our resistance to the liberating facts?"

This led us to a general discussion of helpful ideas, which I summarize for you in the following paragraphs.

No man ever succeeds in covering up that awful ache he feels inside, no matter what he tries, and he tries everything. He shoves it out the front door and it sneaks in the back. He might as well give up, and whether he senses it or not, his giving up, his voluntary defeat, is the very victory he wishes. He must be aware that everything he has done up to now has been a useless pretense. That is enough, for from that fertile ground can blossom what is real.

How can we find a problem-free life? There is a way.

If you have never deliberately questioned yourself, now is the time. Ask yourself, "What is my life all about? Where am I going? What do I really want? Isn't there more to this existence than making money and involvement in noisy activities and one confusion after another? What is the purpose of my life?"

This is a healthy process, for it brings to the surface your subconscious questions. The average man is like a lost hiker who pretends not to notice that he passes the same landmark every few hours. Self-inquiry destroys such self-deception, making the true path visible.

It is not shameful to lack the answers, for that condition is merely an absence of understanding which you can remedy. What is shameful is not to know, while pretending to know. We can brush gold paint onto a burned out light bulb, but it will still not give light.

There is a certain mental statement you can make which works wonders. It must be said calmly, unemotionally, as a simple statement of fact. That statement is, "I don't know." Having said it, you must leave it right there, making no effort to do anything about your not-knowing. Do not desire to know, for that opens the trapdoor through which will sneak all sorts of deceitful mental imps who pretend that they know. And that puts you right back where you started.

Say, "I don't know," and leave it right there. You are doing what is truly right and helpful.

#### HOW TO SIMPLIFY YOUR DAY

Poor, pathetic little man. If he wasn't so tragic he would be funny. Here is a man conniving for security by building up the very temporary possessions which make him feel insecure. And there goes his wife, striving for all the pleasure she can get, totally unaware of the pain in her very striving.

Nothing but our own illusions compels us to run so hard. With awareness of the illusions we can cease to run. We have no place to go anyway; we are already there, but don't see it. The teachings of Zen make this clear.

One of the most difficult tasks of the freedom-seeker is to do nothing, but this *doing nothing in the esoteric sense is the doing of everything needful*. Humanity can be likened to couples dancing outdoors in a thunderstorm, with everyone pretending that they are dancing to music. Only when they stop to see their actual condition can intelligent action take place. To change from where we are, we must first see where we are.

How unnecessarily do human beings complicate things! They worry over a thousand problems, thus forcing themselves into a frantic search for a thousand solutions.

There are not thousands of problems—just one: Man dwells in a state of psychic sleep, of which he is totally unaware.

Consequently, there is no need to waste life in chasing pseudo-solutions. There is only one solution, namely, to awaken from the nightmare. With this, the very source of our problems is smashed.

You may ask, "All right, I suspect I may have been asleep all my life, but what can I do to shake myself awake?"

What can you do?

*Whenever you see other people making themselves sick and tired by the wrong use of their minds, you can determine not to live like that.*

*You can see that your real self has no need whatsoever for either defense or offense.*

*Whenever you are in anguish, you can see that it is simply because your mind is hypnotically paying attention to the wrong thing.*

*You can realize that no pleasant fancy on earth is as beneficial to you as an unpleasant fact.*

*Whenever you fail to hear cosmic harmony, you can realize that the music is always playing, but you fail to hear it because of your distance from the orchestra.*

*In those flashing moments when you see things clearly, you can notice how the truth harmonizes with your own natural sensibleness.*

#### HOW TO WIN NEW STRENGTH AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Fred B. came to seek new strength to battle his way out of the problems he had finally faced. "After hearing your lectures," he said, "I have fresh hope. But I know how easily I give up. How can I maintain the strength to keep going until I break through?"

I asked, "Do you have a major problem just now, or a collection of small ones?"

His pause indicated hesitation in speaking of what was on his mind, but he finally said, "I feel guilty toward those I have wronged in past years. How can I ever make things right?"

"Forgiveness is not necessarily a matter of going to these people, but of psychic understanding. You must forgive yourself for being spiritually asleep; this is possible when you see things as they really are. This pardons you from every offense you have ever committed, for you knew not what you did; you were out of your true mind. Forgiveness has nothing to do with the offended person; it is solely a matter of your own awakening. This will become increasingly clear to you."

"And I will be free of guilt today?"

"If you sweep out yesterday's trash today, is the room clean today?"

"And the new strength I need will also come?"

"Psychic insight is your strength. There is no other."

Fred and I continued our discussion of new strength and self-confidence with the following ideas.

Most people live patched-up lives, like a gardener with a leaky hose. The water which could refresh the garden is drained by leaks. And no matter how quickly he plugs up one leak, another breaks out. So it is with those who do not live by esoteric principles. The ample power of their psychic system is dissipated in hundreds of leaks, including irritability, bad habits, sex neuroses.

Esoteric insight becomes an entirely new channel which supplies tremendous psychic energy, which was there all the time, but wasted.

One helpful principle of esotericism is to use every happening for new strength. Suppose a woman has her feelings hurt. How can this build psychic muscle? Let's investigate. What really hurts is that the unpleasant event produced self-doubt. Now, this kind of self-doubt is positive, beneficial, for it forces the woman to see that she was depending upon fictitious self-strength. It *was* fictitious, else she would not have been shaken. Having seen her false stand, she can abandon it, making room for the true.

#### THE SURE CURE FOR ALL HUMAN PROBLEMS

It is no tragedy to lose money or health or friend or reputation. What is tragic is to fail to use these happenings to grow in cosmic self-strength. True heroes do not run away. They stand bravely, in spite of all which threatens to destroy them. And I will tell you something. If you will let what is trying to destroy you succeed completely, you will come to the point where you can never be destroyed again.

Stop placing an habitual evaluation on whatever happens to you. Observe it impartially, just as if it happened to someone else. The secret is to withdraw the usual sense of "I" from the happening, for this false self distorts everything into pain or counterfeit pleasure. When you cease to evaluate, you rise above both pain and false pleasure, to quietness.

The next time you have an unpleasant experience, ask yourself, "How would I feel if I had wanted it to happen just as it did?" This can start a new way of thinking, which is your esoteric aim.

It is a great mistake to think that you are at the mercy of the human jungle—of the economic system, cruel people, hypocritical laws and of human stupidity in general. You simply do not realize that the prison bars exist in your mind only.

*Nothing whatsoever is pressing you down except that which wrongly exists within your own psychic system.*

What is the cause of human problems? A false sense of self is the parent of all conflicts. And since troubles cease with the fading of the false self, this is a happy fact we can work on. Society cannot help us in this great task, for the whole social structure is founded upon illusions of self-grandeur, breeding cruelty and hypocrisy.

Life has its own natural, untroubled flow, quite independent of the false feeling of "I" we put into it. This flow can be neither created nor blocked, but it can be misunderstood, causing grief. We are already within the Easy Flow of life, but do not see it because of ego-interference. We increasingly enjoy what is already ours by the steady reduction of the false self.

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT IDEAS

1. Esoteric intelligence will solve all painful problems.
2. You can see life in a fresh and pleasant way.
3. All difficulties can be changed into advancements.
4. The way out of problems is ready for all who want to understand.
5. We must rid our minds of false notions.
6. A return to your true nature produces real security.
7. To admit not knowing the answers is the start of genuine wisdom.
8. A thousand problems can be solved with a single esoteric insight.
9. Esoteric insight is true and constant self-strength.
10. You are never at the mercy of anyone or anything.

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## Secrets for Magical Daily Successes

When a man falls into grief, he wants to know two things: "What caused this? How can I escape it?"

The answer is so simple that he may miss it: "You caused it. Change yourself."

There is the human level and there is the esoteric level. When a man transfers his life from the human level to the esoteric level, he lives in both with ease. But whoever lives only on the human plane, has nothing but grief, for that is the constant condition of that plane.

I talk with many businessmen who want to know how esotericism can relieve strains and worries in their financial affairs. One of them, Wilbur D., began our session with, "If only I could break free of the subtle tensions of my business, my day would be a breeze. Why can't I simply conduct my affairs naturally, easily, just as I might play a game of golf?"

"You can," I told him, "when you understand your mistake."

"My mistake?"

"You identify with money. You feel good over gaining money because it seems to establish you as a certain kind of person—a success, a clever salesman. But this exposes you to the possibility of the opposite occurring: the loss of money, leaving you without any identification. Do you see this much?"

"I'm trying. It makes sense." Wilbur paused for a moment