

instinctually knows that something is missing.

Our highly charged left brain “get it done” adult rhythms are kind of afraid of all those amorphous pangs living deep within our emotion and memory infused, amygdala mid-brain. In the same way as described in “Amygdala Hijack: When Emotion Takes Over” on healthline.com, my frontal lobes “really wanted to override the amygdala, and respond in the most rational, appropriate way.” Sitting in front of the therapist was rational. What was going to unfold in the coming weeks was far from that.

“The first step in the acquisition of wisdom is silence, the second listening, the third memory, the fourth practice, the fifth teaching others.”

— Solomon Ibn Gabirol

Land of Vulnerability

Our adult mind actually acts as a dam to hold back other perceptions. Think of how much we do to avoid remembering, especially those deeply visceral life moments of an old friend who is gone for instance, a hug we always wanted, or a hate or love we never expressed. Some of these old experiences are like our scarier dreams that we would never even consider going back in to. Please feel free to hop off here, but what you will find if you stick around will change your world and your kids’ kids’ life experiences as well.

During our youth and into adolescence, our thoughts and feeling sway, mingle, and surge. Everyday Mentor’s website tells us “the amygdala and prefrontal cortex battle

it out for control over behavior—until the prefrontal cortex eventually takes over.” As adults, that battle is just quieter, its aches and pains more subtle, instead of crying at our parents’ feet when we are bored or tired.

But the feelings live on, embedded within heart and stomach brains — and what lengths do we go to today to not cry or feel too much? How hard do we avoid sitting still, in silence, so that our heart world does not open and speak its mind? You and I will eat, drink, run, work, argue, read the paper, watch TV, listen to music, take the kids somewhere, walk the dog, talk on phone, text, have sex, talk about other people, check the sports page, masturbate, smoke a joint, uselessly and aimlessly surf the internet, and do a million other things other than sit quietly in a dimly lit room.

The actions all seem innocuous. But what are we avoiding? You and I both know we are pushing against something, something big and kind of scary. Carl Jung based his career on the search for self and recognized how difficult it seems at first: “People will do anything, no matter how absurd, to avoid facing their soul.”

Growing Up Sucks

Sitting is the only classroom. Are you willing to become a student to your life and marriage? You must perceive yourself as student in relationship. That is why so many fail. Solomon Ibn Gabirol says that the first step as student in the acquisition of wisdom is “silence, the second listening, the third memory, the fourth practice, the fifth teaching others.”

A few weeks after that first session with Dr. Moore, I

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sat for the first time, sober, in a room, eyes closed, in the company of perfect strangers, guided by someone who did this every day for, it turns out, the last nine years.

We did a few deep breaths with our hands on our stomachs. This makes sense to me now, but it did not then. She guided us to focus on our stomach. Slowly, I could feel a soothing pool of humility, a heaviness in my shoulders. It was similar to when I was on a fishing boat off the Florida Keys, miles offshore. The further out we headed, the closer we came to something bigger, more portentous. The continental shelf and its playful turquoise water were giving way to a ponderous, deep blue current. It was the mighty Gulf Stream, over 2,600 feet deep in places, with one million cubic feet of its water flowing past that shelf every second. There is an ominous tone to that part of the ocean.

The longer I sat, the more I sensed something, sensations that felt bigger, heavier, and impending, just off in the distance. It was similar to those darker gulf-stream currents. There was a fathomlessness. My seemingly important thoughts about my current life stopped sticking to my brain. Thought sensations were not staying in my forehead, but drifting into my ribs.

My teacher's voice in that room seemed far away as she continued to talk us through slower breaths. The clatter of expectations for next week's meetings, the aches surrounding my mostly off-again relationship with my fifth girlfriend in two years, and the question about where my Nineties life in England was going all felt very briefly like someone else's issues. These thoughts were like my three dogs when I pour their food: quiet, poised, expectant, anxious and unsure.

Heavy Fullness, Unplugged in London

By the end of that class, I had sunk into a heavy fullness that felt like some large, curved edge was near. I sensed a soothing pool of humility darkening blue around me. What I experienced in the final fifteen minutes of that class was a moment of subtle interruption of all things linear and obvious to me. I would have laughed if someone said that a complete undoing and redoing of my life was going to ensue.

When we opened our eyes, it took a few minutes to rev back up. That edge was gone and it was time to take a cab home. Before I made it to the door, though, the teacher came up to me. I believe she could sense a subtle fracture in my look, an unsettledness.

“Remember, Bill, all Eastern thought is based on not knowing, saying I don’t know,” she said. “Western thought is about defining something, everything, about having an answer. The further you go into I don’t know, the wobblier it gets.” I had no answer. I thanked her and left.

Two weeks after this meditation class, I came home from work and decided I would try sitting alone. More of that graying dullness was washing through me. “F-it,” I thought, “I am not going for a run, having a drink or eating anything. I am just going to sit.”

I put my pillow on the ground. I faced the inky, chimney-lined skyline of central London. Squeaky brakes outside did what they did best outside, slicing the wet night. Just another night in the ancient town. Not a big deal that another body begins to sit for the first time on his own. This city has seen it all. Ancient Gaelic warriors

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thousands of years ago gathered around fires, calling in the spirits to guide their walks and hunts. Just around the corner a week before, another Roman site had been found during the excavation for a new building. This one dated back to pre-Christ times.

Sitting is the oldest human exercise. In Eric Jaffe's article *Meditate on It*, we read that "A couple hundred thousand years ago, early humans huddled around campfires to meditate and partake in rituals, which strengthened the mind's ability to connect symbols and meaning." As I began to slow my breath, I felt something. If there was ever a time in my life that something could spill, it was right then. My neck and shoulders tensed up, as if something was trying to come up and out of my chest.

Without any thoughts attached to them, a wash of feelings surged upward. There was no content to these emotions; they seemed to be just circulating in the air in my room. The pressure at the back of my neck and head was building, uncomfortable to the point where I was not sure I could keep going. But I did. Then tears streamed down my face, but I was not sad or happy. It was like my adult sensibilities were just watching, listening, and feeling a cracking of my self.

Weeks later I wrote in my journal about this specific moment when tears started to flow. It felt like the emotional part of me, over the last ten to twelve years, had been parched like some endless desert valley, scorched by ceaseless sun and wind. But as my thoughts drifted down into my heart, a stirring, gap, or shift of some kind ensued, and a drop of rain soften that desert floor. "To weep is to make less the depth of grief," wrote

Shakespeare in *King Henry VI*.

Then the clouds, I mean tears, really opened up and exploded as my body shook like I was being choked and hanged. Some part of me just stayed with it. Again, there was no content or story behind or inside these heaving sobs. They were crying themselves, leaving my thirty-one-year-old out of the plot. At the height of these bodily convulsions, I passed out.

When I woke up in the dark, there was sense of utter peaceful exhaustion. I had some trepidation, though, because it somehow felt I was not alone. Then, like in a movie, an audible whispering voice clearly and succinctly said, "Welcome back."

Holy acid trip! How far had my imagination taken me? How far off the reservation had I traveled? Suddenly, and I get goose bumps as I write these words now, I sensed and felt that I was sitting in the middle of a circle of stately wise, female Native American elders who were chanting an ancient, guttural, and mesmerizing song. Right there in my Chelsea apartment. Did they take the tube?

I can hear this chant right now. We read in *Seth Speaks*, "In moments of solitude you may become aware of some of the other streams of consciousness...hear words, see images that appear out of context with your own thoughts. According to your educational beliefs, background, you interpret these in any number of ways."

Was all this coming from inside of me or around me? Was I awake or dreaming? Was I alone or were these apparitions sharing my room? It was dark and quiet in my room, but a reunion was taking place. That is, for the first time, I sat alone and just listened to my heart.

Nutso, Right?

To many readers, this might seem like some drug-induced, psychotic schism. Morning headlines read, “Commodity broker hear voices, sheds a tear in Central London. No casualties reported.” Actually, there was one victim, my entire sense and perception of time, self, feelings, the past, and who I really was or was not. No biggie.

It is probably what Eratosthenes felt two thousand years ago when he planted a stick in the ground in Alexandria to see what angle the sun’s shadow would take. When he saw that its angle was different than the one the sun cast in the city of Syene to the south, he realized the world was curved.

When I woke up in the dark that evening, my life experience was curved. Now I must convince you to do the same, to be willing and courageous enough to trust not only me, but any current sense of boredom, longing, and a desire to make changes in your life. Trust that there is much more to the linear, this-then-that, good-bad perspective which your adult thoughts are handing you.

Yeah, right. Sit and chant and visualize, blah blah, and my husband will stop being an idiot, my parents will stop driving me crazy, and my kids will do the dishes which will make me happy and my marriage will miraculously blossom. I get it. You want action, you want others to understand you and not talk back or disagree with you. You want less stress, more time, less anger, more forgiveness.

When you see what is in store for you inside, once you get through the first few painful old memories, or the

boredom, and wait for the movie to start inside, things will shift. But I am not expecting you to believe that, yet.

What I Found, What You Will Find

As the days and weeks unfolded, and I continued to sit, the experience of opening something deeper and crazier continued. It was like going up into your parents' attic to see boxes and trunks you never knew were there. It would take you years to go through them, but you decide to do so.

I have sensed a thousand insights since my first evening, as will you too. The single most powerful and important truth, whether you believe it or not, is that your physical adult heart is the heart of the child still living inside. This silent, roaring, childhood-soaked, electromagnetic muscle stores every single dream, memory, joy, and fear that has ever existed in you, your parents, their parents, and everything else that has ever glanced across your intuition.

In order to know the extent of your frustration about your husband, you will need to measure and re-feel your love and hate across your archetypes and that original male figure in your life.

Much Deeper Possibilities: You are the Hero

Nothing you ever do will release the power, wisdom, and possibilities that are stored in your heart like sitting alone with your back straight. No pill, exercise, class, degree, song, lecture, podcast, book, or religious sermon can even come close. Just sit and wait. Put this book down and close

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your eyes. Keep your back straight, though.

Steve Jobs had one book next to his bed his whole adult life. It was *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. Guess what that main message of that book is? Just sit. How strongly did Jobs, one of the world's most prolific creators and successful entrepreneurs, believe in the transformative power of sitting quietly? At his request, every mourner who attended his funeral received a wooden box. Guess what was in that box? *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

You are reading this book and others like it because, like me, you want more, desire more, want to see your marriage and relationships become more. You do not have to know what to do next once you sit. Sitting will guide you.

The most powerful forces in your universe are the inner sensations, that boyhood love for the freedom felt while bike riding and climbing trees, that girlhood excitement about the same things, as well as flowers, story-time, and grandma's old magazines. Those are the feelings that will bring you back to the life waiting for you today. Everything else, any other place you turn your attention to — because you are afraid of touching and feeling your child-based sensibilities — is an utter waste of time and breath.

Your ability to be in a mature relationship has so little to do with the other person and everything to do with your ability to sit silently and listen, know, unwind, and apply the emotions that are stored inside of you. Nathaniel Branden in *Breaking Free* has issued a similar call to arms. To all of us who struggle to allow the kingdom inside to be brought to the surface, to our

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rational self, he says, “No pain is so destructive as the pain one does not face — and no suffering as enduring as the suffering one cannot acknowledge.”

What you are going to see, though, is that this story about “deeper possibilities,” about this passage of opening the human heart through this timeless and simple exercise of sitting, is not only old, but both personal and universal. I am not talking about my story, about sitting one evening in London. I am talking about your story, about your life that seems pedestrian and ordinary compared to the great hero stories you may be watching tonight that Hollywood tells and sells.

“Where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence.”

— Joseph Campbell

Every tale of adventure — *The Odyssey*, *Braveheart*, the *Bible*, *Mulan*, or *Don Quixote* — seems so exciting, so real, death defying, otherworldly, and so utterly eternal, mysterious, foreign. It also feels external to your world. You experience these characters with your adult, rational perceptions as legends, people who have gone to the brink in some battle with something dark-ish and returned, having achieved something bigger than themselves. It is the hero journey template.

These stories appear to be about others, but are in fact just myths and allegories written for and about you and your fully unleashed heart-story. This sounds dramatic and almost silly. You say that there were actual Huns and the British that had to be fought, so that is not allegory. Yes, I get it.

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But from your released heart's perspective — from the inner planes of longing, sorrow, from the purview of the tears and smiles generated from the fully-erupted sensations of childhood dreams and memories, reached through the passage of deep sitting — every single adventure story is exactly like yours. When you psychologically and bio-magnetically leave the un-lived life of your rational adult self and meet your child-heart longings in the chair in your home office, you will see relatives, places, dragon-like things, and lands. They might seem foreign at first, but then become recognizable as yours, your family's and community's. You might not physically fight a Hun, but emotional exertion will be similar.

“If the person doesn't listen to the demands of his own spiritual and heart life, the person has put himself off-center,” Joseph Campbell said. “Psychologically, the dragon is one's own binding of oneself to one's ego...must re-associate himself with the powers of nature, which are the powers of our life, from which our mind removes us.”

When you commit to your heart's world, you will realize you have been looking in the wrong direction. You have been searching outward to escape and travel psycho-emotionally into the worlds of other people, transporting yourself during a two-hour movie to other places and times. You do this so that you can feel, remember, and believe again, even for a moment, in what you want, love, and trust.

The hero epic inspires, but what I know and am pushing you to experience is that when you turn inward and dive into the bewildering, nail-biting, confusing, and emotionally unruly realm of your heart's memories, that

inner eight-year-old's world, you will find your real life there. Campbell says your sitting quietly is a passage back to forgotten feelings, is the "jumping-off place...where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence."

Rational No Match for Heart

What is happening when we sit in a chair with our back straight and eyes closed? How can this simple, seemingly innocent, non-action exercise be so altering and create so much drama? It is simple math. Rollin McCraty says in *The Heart Has Its Own 'Brain' and Consciousness* your heart generates an electrical current that is sixty times stronger than your brain's current, while the bio-magnetic field it produces is five thousand times stronger than the head's.

Think of—I mean, feel that. The raw electric power and energy of your heart muscle is five thousand times stronger than all the fleshy wiring and neurons stored in your brain. The heart is an electromagnetic muscle, a punchbowl, a warehouse that collects, absorbs, holds, and stores its goods using electricity. It is beating silently, literally ignored and forgotten by our conscious self, until we find the chair.

What many people misunderstand is that mental and emotional stress are not caused by the electricity of emotions coursing through their heart, head, and nervous system. The stress comes from the resistance our adult, rational left-brain mechanisms put up. It is like having a nightmare and waking up relieved at dawn. Your rational self is ready to begin its day, unsullied and

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so thankful to have cast away from that inner, dream place of confusion and fear.

That is the basic template of the human conscious, the waking self versus the deeper unconscious self. The challenge, though, is that this unconscious piece of us is not gone. It is just waiting below.

The Best Part

This is where it all turns. This is where and when we understand how important it is to return to the stories that our heart is aching, literally dying, to tell us.

Think of what we call the unconscious. It is all our feelings, every single one ever felt, which our mighty heart is storing. Your heart has been holding your love for chasing butterflies since you were seven years old and those soft memories of your childhood dog. You see an old photo of her or watch that dog food commercial where the dog ages, and a wistfulness seeps up from your chest, an ancient human longing to share and exchange warmth with another mammal that stirs way below our thoughts.

Then a tear wells up which is that child's heart-want in you for a dog's undivided, all-consuming, smiling and wagging love. That want is completely foreign and out of time and place to your current adult needs of cleaning the garage and finishing your taxes. The loving memory of your dog, a broken heart from eighth grade prom, or the regret from passing on a job twelve years ago are all part of an intimately woven life and world of yourself breathing inside the cells of your heart. Nothing in life has occurred without an emotion driving it.