

one

chapter

The Path of Truth

This book is about being able to express your true self freely and fully in all aspects of your life. Unfortunately expressing ourselves fully, whether it is in the form of telling the simple truth about our feelings, acting in opposition to society's norm, projecting ourselves boldly in the world, or standing out as different, is not often sanctioned by friends, family or society. In general people feel inhibited to express their uniqueness.

Expressing ourselves fully and honestly is something we are not trained to do. We are trained to tell half-truths and omit painful or embarrassing facts. We do this in the name of being "nice," to avoid hurting other people's feelings, or to protect ourselves from the reactions of others. In addition, we have been taught not to be "selfish." This is considered egotistical, conceited, self-centered, and negative. Consequently, to speak our truth, if our truth is in opposition to others' needs and desires, is seen as a crime, ultimately punishable by a sentence in purgatory (or so deduced by our subconscious). Even if we are fortunate enough to know what our truth is, after all the programming of what we should and shouldn't feel and do, it is a brave soul who can voice that truth.

We have also become adept at using a great variety of *personas* or masks. This term refers to styles of behavior that we employ to get attention and approval, or to cope with our particular life situations. These personas take on personality characteristics such as the caretaker, helper, nice guy, got it all together, sex pot, helpless one, rebel, independent, or provider. These roles usually become part of us either because we emulate what we observed growing up or because we decided, consciously or subconsciously, to behave a certain way to cope with traumatic or unpleasant events. Although in some ways these roles seem to help us, in actuality they can hold us back. The problem is they usually inhibit our

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ability to fully express who we are because we become stuck in them, like wearing a coat you can't take off. The masks we wear most often could be helpful as part of a repertoire of behaviors in the world, but when we no longer use them by choice, we lose the whole range of possibilities for how we might otherwise choose to express ourselves.

So we have a challenge. If we can't say what our truth is, because

we need to fit within a certain norm to be acceptable, comfortable or appropriate, or because it has become habitual for safety or approval, then where is there room just to be ourselves? And if we could be ourselves—expressing fully, what would that be like? In addition, I propose there is another challenge to full self-expression besides the restrictions programmed by our family and culture or adopted by ourselves. Have you ever felt frustrated, disgusted or hopeless with the way our modern culture functions?

With all the apparent wealth in our society, more and more people still become homeless and destitute. Moreover, growing numbers are becoming addicted to drugs, and the suicide rate for youth is rising at an alarming rate. Even if we function within our society well enough to deal successfully with financial issues and live a semblance of a “normal” life, we may find ourselves experiencing another type of hopelessness—not out of worry about where our next meal will come from but we may despair of ever feeling truly “satisfied.”

When concerned with paying for food, shelter, or other bills, it is sometimes difficult to see dissatisfaction as the core issue that it is. It is easy to say, “If I just had my basic needs met, everything would be great. Then I could relax and be happy.” However, as we move beyond having our basic needs met, and start fulfilling our desires for more abundance—a better job, travel, vacations, fancier homes, better relationships, or more growth seminars—the underlying dissatisfaction becomes more obvious. Whether we live in a state of abject poverty or in comfort and acceptable complacency, the underlying craving is the same. The poorest beggar and the wealthiest person usually experience the same or similar core issues.

What is it we are all seeking? What are we all craving that has

us running around like dogs chasing their tails to satisfy our end⁵ less external desires, that has us blaming our partners, children, relatives, coworkers, bosses, government, or circumstances for our woes, that has us endlessly feeding consumerism to the point of smothering and poisoning our planet, that has us killing ourselves with diseases and accidents and torturing each other with wars and human injustices. What is this “endless aching need” as Bette Midler sang in the hit song *The Rose*?

The question “What are we seeking?” is an existential one.

Although I don’t presume to have the definitive answer, I will venture to speculate. I believe our desire for connection to the oneness of life is the source of all our striving, whether we are conscious of it or not.

I propose that what we all have in common, from the pauper to the rich man, from the criminal to the man of distinction, is the desire to be connected to that which is the essence of life and to feelings of love.

By love I do not mean transient romantic love, though we think that will provide the answer, because aspects of it feel close to what we are truly searching for. Instead I am referring to essential, unconditional

love that seems to be only found “from whence we came and to where we are going”—a connection to the very essence of life itself.

Many people say that such a connection is only possible when we die. Does the only hope lie in death, then? Can the only solution to this worldly life of painful separation from the source of all love, peace, and harmony be to live lives of desperation or complacency, biding our time until we can “go home” again—home to that place where we can fully experience those feelings of connectedness, peace, warmth, and ultimate love that we hear about from people who have had near-death experiences? Is that why so many people live lives of slow death, through abusive habits or illness—in order to get home faster? Is that why so many individuals obliterate their feelings through drugs, alcohol, or other addictions just to forget everything until they can finally return to the source? Is living our lives in perpetual avoidance of this pain of separation the only tactic? Are there other viable options?

I propose that there is another way, although it may not be easy. Learning anything new, especially for which we have no ex-

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perience and few role models can be challenging. But if you open your mind and heart to the possibilities of this new way, however it contradicts premises and concepts you presently hold, a new way of life can be found. I do not promise that this new way forever frees us from the pain and challenges of living this life of separation that prevails here on planet earth. But this new way can make moments of feeling “connectedness” more frequent and open us to experiencing other human beings from a new perspective. Feelings of separation from oneself, others, or life, will give way to a growing feeling of being connected, a willingness to be here, and the ability to fully express ourselves and participate in life. We can get a clearer sense of who we are and what unique things we have to offer that feel right to the core of our being. We might even find that we are spending more of our lives in a state of satisfaction and deeply-felt gratitude rather than continual dissatisfaction. We might find that we don’t have to waste so much energy insulating ourselves from our deeper truth and the reaction of the outer world to that truth. This would make much more energy available to maintain vibrant health, achieve abundance, and joyfully creatively express ourselves. And such moments of losing ourselves in the act of creative expression could be some of our greatest moments of feeling the connection to timelessness, to the essence of life.

I call this journey the *path of truth*. The destination of the journey is not a static goal, rather the journey is an ever-evolving, ongoing process where the environment and the scenery begin to take on more and more of the qualities mentioned above as the travel continues.

The road to a life that fully and freely expresses more of who we truly are starts with our own daily personal expression of who

we are. We do that by telling the truth to ourselves about what is real for us, what we are feeling, and what has meaning for us. Then we become willing to take the risks involved in letting that truth be known. This is not something that one learns to do overnight. It is an art, and like learning any art form, it takes time, practice, and patience. Much of this book will address this subtle art of being fully in our truth. Once we have learned this skill, we have created an optimal environment that allows our creative selves to fully blossom.

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I call this process the path of truth because the concept of truth comes up many times as a critical element to creating a life that expresses who we are. Much of the journey is about gaining ever-increasing knowledge of our personal truths and learning to know, accept and express ourselves and such truths more fully.

But what is truth? To say something is the truth seems to exclude other options, opinions, or beliefs. There are universally accepted truths like gravity and other physical laws; and there are philosophical truths, of which there are many differences of opinion. Although the truth is that which cannot be disputed, almost everything can be disputed. How often do we hear that there has been a new scientific discovery that contradicts something we previously held to be the absolute truth. How many religions claim to protect the only truth. However, one distinguishing characteristic of the path of truth is that there are no absolute truths, and at the same time there is only one truth—your truth.

The only truth is that which is true for you and that cannot be disputed by another. What filters through your set of life experiences, circumstances, lessons, and being is unique only to you, and can only be seen and felt by you. This means that *the* truth can only be *your* truth.

Henry Palmer, creator of *Avatar Training*, adds another dimension to the definition of the truth. He says that truth is when your beliefs align with your experience. You can have an idea that something seems true, but when your personal experience supports your beliefs then to you it is a truth. For example, for a person who grew up in a ghetto, truth may be that the world is not a safe place, while a person who grew up in a more loving environment would not hold this truth. Though personal truths can be changed with new experiences, healing work, and reprogramming, unless someone is willing to do the work necessary to change their truth, it will persist, continuing to be substantiated by their experience.

Although you may meet others who share some of your truths, your own truth will never exactly match someone else's. The sad thing is that wars are fought over trying to change people's truths or trying to make them uniform. Such attempts are fruitless and

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absurd since no two individuals—with their beliefs, experiences, and inherent makeup—are the same.

With society's attempts to congeal many truths into only a few, we as individuals have lost touch with our own unique truth.

Although we all have opinions and ideas that seem to be our own and different from what society dictates, very few of us actually live in the ever-flowing, exceedingly dynamic truth of the moment. In other words, we have lost touch with what is real for us on the deepest level, to the point that most of us don't even know how to begin to access that deeper truth. We are so programmed with ideas about what is believed to be true, or what should or shouldn't be done, said, or felt, that there is very little room for what is. However, with the notion of "what is," we can begin to bridge our personal truths with the universal truth. In more esoteric terms, universal truth can be described as the never-changing in the midst of the ever-changing, or the only truth in the midst of the many truths which equates to our deeper or higher knowing.

The journey of the path of truth is to come to the only one truth there is—your truth and your own experience of reality. Though absolute as that truth may be for you, it will often differ from other's.

Therefore, you must be willing to give up attachment to the idea that your's is the only right truth. Giving up attachment to this does not mean replacing your truth with someone else's; it means letting go of the notion of convincing others to accept your's as their own. Much of our energy and creative juices are wasted trying to get others to take on our truths. The key is to learn to let others have their truth while you have yours, regardless of the price you may have to pay, such as disapproval, emotional upsets, or threats of abandonment.

Although the path of truth may not be always easy, the rewards are great.

The key to the path is in the knowing.knowing what our truth is at such an essential level that we can distinguish it from the many voices within our head as well as from the many other voices coming at us from without.

When we know our truth so that it stands out above the rest of the chorus, we can hold firm and take whatever actions or inactions

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are necessary based on that truth. Being clear about our truth gives us a foundation of inner knowing that provides strength to face the challenges that arise in life. I call participating on this journey being a spiritual adventurer. The spiritual adventurer knows how to surrender to the flow, armed only with a garment of truth and connection to the source of that truth. This way of living is synonymous with living in integrity and has us commit our lives to the truth on every level. This degree of integrity raises our self esteem

which in turn has us believe in our deservability—that we deserve to be loved and succeed at what we desire.

A question often asked is how can we tell the difference between our real truth (our higher or deeper knowing) and what only appears to be the truth (that which arises from ego or fear)? Typically, our deeper knowing speaks in a whisper through our subtle senses, such as through vague feelings, body sensations, intuition, or gentle thoughts in the back of our minds. By contrast thoughts based on fear usually speak as strong words we hear in our head and are associated with “shoulds.” Discerning the difference between these voices is a fine art and many of the practices and tools described in this book are geared toward learning to know the difference and to knowing your personal truth in any given moment. These practices heighten sensitivity to the subtle messages that help you discern the difference. Like any art, the ability to make such distinctions must be practiced before it is truly mastered. As mastery at knowing and the courage to stand on one’s personal truth is gained, life becomes richer, more vibrant, and more profoundly connected to all that is.

I have watched myself move from a life of contraction, drama, unhealthy and unhappy relationships, low energy, inner tension, and general dissatisfaction to a place of overflowing abundance, joy, gratitude and creativity. The quality of every aspect of my life has improved significantly, and will continue to do so as I continue to do the “work.” The work I refer to is not dull or arduous as we have come to associate with the word but instead colorful, engaging, sometimes amusing, and other times challenging. Because upleveling our lives does take some energy and focus, one of the keys to this path is an overriding sense of dedication and willingness to creating positive change.

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As with any new endeavor, getting started often takes a concerted effort, and extra focus is required to develop momentum. Even more challenging may be reversing a downward spiral to begin movement in a new direction. However, let me assure you, once the wheel has begun to turn in the direction you want to go, there is an upward spiraling effect making it progressively easier to keep moving in the new direction.

This book contains many tools and practices that function as stepping stones on the path; which ones you choose, and in what order, is your choice. What is essential is that you make the commitment to begin the journey and commit to sticking with whatever practices or tools you choose for at least a month at a time. Many of the practices may become an integral part of your life that you will use for years to come. As you begin experiencing the positive results of working with these tools, you will be motivated and inspired to continue.

I caution you, however, not to take on too much initially. The tendency at the beginning of any self-improvement program, whether

geared toward exercise, diet, or personal growth, is to become overzealous and to attempt more than you can handle. Since this is a path of truth, which means knowing and following your inner truth, you must honor your pace and be honest and realistic about how much you can do right now. One new practice done consistently is worth far more than multiple efforts done sporadically then ultimately dropped. Take small bites and chew slowly.

On this path, I have studied with many teachers and taken numerous workshops. Over the years I have spoken to other students who had not benefited as much from these classes while I had gotten so much out of the teaching or workshop. What made the difference, I realized, was that I would do “the homework.”

Whether the teachers gave us specific assignments or not, I would always select practices or exercises I could do regularly. I would make time for the work, no matter how busy my life seemed to be, because I knew my life depended on it.

Consequently, I want to stress the importance of putting into practice some of what you read, whether it is an actual exercise or just heightening your awareness. Some of the tools don't take time,

only a focusing of attention because they involve listening to or watching 11
certain words, actions, or behaviors. It is possible to commit to some degree of practice no matter what your life circumstances are. Having a friend or friends, “path partners” to discuss things or do the exercises with can be very helpful.

Although the path of truth is highly rewarding, it can be challenging as well. Once you start shaking things up and shining the light of awareness on previously hidden places, you may feel worse for a while. Know that this is part of a natural healing process just as a fever burns out microorganisms from the body, or a boil must erupt and drain before it smooths over. Understand that the difficult circumstances or feelings are temporary and will pass. They become your passport to higher ground.

There may also be plateaus along the way where you think you are stuck and haven't made any progress. However, at such times, even though things may feel the same as they were before you started, once you have made positive movement or an internal shift, you are further along the road and never really go back to where you started. It's like spiraling up a mountain. As you circle around to a similar area on the mountain, the view may be essentially the same, but you are now higher up. In time circumstances will improve.

Even though we are on a path and will pass by many different destinations along the way, remember that this is a never-ending journey. Let the joys and sorrows along the way be the destination. Let what you hold onto be only what you have learned and even be willing to let go of that if necessary.

For the path of truth is a path to freedom. In becoming free, we become light. To become free, it is necessary to let go of what is not possible to hold onto anyway—restrictions and dictates of the mind as well as the seriousness and struggle of life. As we let go, little by little, not demanding more of ourselves than we are ready for, we

begin to taste freedom—freedom to know and express who we are, freedom to create what is true for us, freedom to love, and freedom to be of service in a meaningful way. Let us begin the journey on the path of truth.

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