

R I C K Y D E R I S Z

"A significant contribution to the field."
David Lorimer, Scientific And Medical Network

Mindsets For Mindfulness

AWAKENING FROM CRISIS TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

"A guide that navigates challenging yet potentially enlightening experiences."
Phil Borges, Director, CRAZYWISE

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This book is dedicated to those who thought they were crazy before realising they aren't what they think, and to those starting to question their sanity.

What if...

The rumble of rising emotion trembles through me. I'm stunned and speechless and I see mountains and treetops and the sun's reflection on lake waters, the backdrop of Titignano Castle, Oviedo, Italy. My heart feels like it's about to burst. I feel something I always knew I was missing, a part of me lost: *enchantment*.

Enchantment, the feeling of wonder and awe and joy at the miracle of it all. That feeling always remained in some way, flickering through my disenchanted mind, a flame dim but smouldering, a remnant of its ability to illuminate the darkness. When did I become disenchanted? When was the world I grew up in stripped of its magic?

Can I use the word magic as an adult? Is it socially acceptable? Well, no, it isn't, and that's part of the problem. We live in an age of great change, an age disconnected from and disenchanted with the magic of existence. Yet moments of magic occur. Choruses of chills, beacons of a language unspoken, are ignored, minimised, unseen.

"This is wishful thinking," we might say, "it's just a coincidence." And then we shut down, avert our eyes, put our hands over our ears and drown out the unseen and unheard, limited and boxed in by boundaries of the story we've been told.

But what if this story is wrong? What if this story is an injustice, a societal mishap, that overlooks the very nature of existence and the human potential? What if all that you feel is real? This book is about the path to enchantment — the individual journey and the collective awakening. Allow this book to give you permission to explore the miraculous.

Before I jump into my history of mental illness and subsequent spiritual awakening, I felt it crucial to start the story from the perspective of what's possible. The first chapter of my story is unique yet all too familiar: a young man struggling to overcome years of

depression, always questioning *is this it?*, and struggling to find meaning in it all. The second chapter — awakening from crisis into higher consciousness — is less common. It's my intention this book will offer a structure and resources to bridge the gap.

Many of us find a way to cope or to survive or to enjoy a semblance of normality, a sigh of relief during those days where we feel relatively normal. I've been there and was grateful for it at the time. However, we aren't told the alternative story; that normal isn't normal at all. That normal is settling. That normal is conforming. That normal is a small fraction of our true potential.

My spiritual path has opened a portal into an altogether “not normal” reality. A reality dream-like and bursting with life, full of brilliant synchronicities, and inner and outer experiences that defy belief.

And the beauty is, this reality is our birthright. Just as our creative flow and spontaneity are stifled through years of education, our capacity to perceive magic and live a life of the miraculous is stifled through a societal suppression, the narrative of our time.

But times are changing.

THE AGE OF RE-ENCHANTMENT

That day in Italy in July 2019 was special. I'd presented *Welcome to the Age of Re-Enchantment* at the Science and Nonduality conference. I realised I was living a reality I never thought was possible. A reality that back in my disenchanted days I wouldn't have even dreamed through the wildest “what if” scenario.

This was the moment where it dawned on me I'd passed the tipping point of recovery and entered a new paradigm. This was the moment I knew all of my darkest moments

were imbued with meaning. This was the moment the fire of my soul ignited my life's journey. This was the moment I realised those false futures were stories.

And this is the crux of the issue: most of us want something more in life. In dreaming that something more, we limit our own imagination. We are limited by ideas of what's possible and conditioned from the day we are born to believe what we really want is actually inherited from someone else's story.

It begins by unlearning the old, experiencing the new, daring to imagine something greater. The *Mindsets for Mindfulness* are the practices to bridge the gap from the dream and your current reality – to follow the path of re-enchantment, to connect to the wholeness of your being. It is essential to know yourself before transforming your world.

It is my hope that with these words I ignite the fire of your own imagination. By feeling the lucidity, the pulsating aliveness of this imagined future, you will become your own story. Each of us has a unique journey towards enchantment. The freedom of imagination presents this path, our divine destiny, our birthright, our true nature.

It is my hope that no matter where you are on your path right now, as you read this book, your dream response to “what if” becomes enchanted, wondrous, and life-altering.

Because life is a dream, dear reader, and you are the dreamer.

The Years Of Disenchantment

I first became acquainted with depression when I was 15. I didn't know why I felt so sad, empty and hopeless until a few years later when I had a diagnosis. I developed a panic disorder not long after and spent many years living in a state of persistent anxiety. While at university, around the age of 22, I experienced a prolonged spell of psychosis, an experience I wouldn't wish on anyone.

I have been suicidal. I've had spells on antidepressants. I've had one awful experience of therapy, one incredible experience of therapy, and the blessing of a personal mentor, coach, and spiritual teacher. From early on I've done all I possibly could to learn about my experience, to heal, to become mentally healthy.

My yearning to be normal, like everyone else, set me on a tenacious, borderline obsessive journey to understand myself. I'd love to profess this was a heroic calling but in truth it was a matter of survival. I wanted to feel something other than numbness or fear. To live with freedom without severe restrictions of anxiety and depression.

I've been highly functioning throughout these experiences. Many people close to me didn't realise. Below the surface I was aware my life was going well, that I had so many incredible people in my life. But there was something significant lacking. I felt disconnected. My world was flat and lifeless. My reality was insufficient. I felt I was missing out on something but didn't know what.

I'd have moments of feeling okay, moments of feeling great, but in no time another cycle of depression would begin. I began to live for those moments of feeling great. I chased them as many young people do – through partying, drugs, alcohol, entertainment, sex,

escapism. My reality remained insufficient in the spaces between highs, I'd resigned myself to acceptance of this sombre status quo.

Each time I hit rock bottom I'd ask myself: *when will this end?* If I wasn't going to end my life what were my options? I was trying my best. Yet the insufficiency remained. I didn't realise the problem wasn't a malfunction with me. I was looking for nourishment from normal without realising normal was deficient, a surface-level, zero-calorie story hiding the deeper truth of reality.

ENTERING A NEW REALITY

When I was young I'd sometimes gaze at a distant object or landscape and touch my eyelid. As I applied pressure my vision changed and distorted and I'd pretend I was influencing reality, resculpting skylines, merging clouds, bending light. It was a mini reality shift, a way of manipulating my perspective, playing God in idle time.

When I had psychosis it was as if this pressure was applied to my psyche. My perception changed, my thoughts were influencing reality, smiles were resculpted into sinister smirks, noises and background conversation edited into paranoid dialogue. My psyche was fragmented and cracked open and it was a gift.

I didn't realise at the time my experience was a journey into oneness, the reality of existence unseen and undetected by the senses. My ego struggled to keep up with the contradiction of my direct experience and the story of reality with only one answer: *I was crazy*. I'd completely lost my mind and I was crazy.

According to Sufi poet Rumi, "the soul has been given its own ears to hear things the mind does not understand." My mind didn't understand the door that had opened and it

was terrifying. It was during this reality shift I intuitively started meditation, as a last resort to reclaim my sanity, to reclaim the island of my mind.

Part of me knew there was a different way of living and being, that what I was experiencing wasn't pathological or dysfunctional, but misunderstood. Once in the flow with meditation I gravitated towards spirituality. Without knowing it meditation was developing my spiritual senses. I started to hear things the mind didn't understand, a welcome replacement from hearing voices that weren't there.

I'd tried reading spiritual writing before and was always left unimpressed. Yet with the awakening of the senses words previously redundant beamed with aliveness. My quest continued as I started to question what was below the surface of the world I felt was so fixed before. As an atheist and firm-advocate of the scientific method, to my amazement, I started to find answers to my experience in the wisdom of religion.

I could see the source was a perennial philosophy, a spiritual all-you-can-eat buffet of nourishment.

I just wanted to be normal, I wanted to live and do what normal people do. Instead meditation and mindfulness opened me to an entirely new world. I entered a rabbit hole of new meaning, new dimensions, new realities. This wasn't (and isn't) an easy process. The old structure of my world was falling apart, a crumbling empire I was desperately trying to hold into place. The birth of something new means the death of old.

But I was encouraged by the light within becoming clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, like a seed of who I really was waiting to sprout from the darkness. Eventually I had no choice but to surrender, to let go, to die a spiritual death. Normal died with it. And beyond the rubble another empire was discovered.

MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION, AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

You might be reading this book to learn mindfulness to ease anxiety, calm the mind, slow down, appreciate. Mindfulness and meditation will provide all of these benefits and more, giving you headspace and greater clarity and control over your emotions and thought processes.

However, the journey doesn't end there. Normal isn't a final destination but a brief stopping point on the path to something greater. There is value in this book if you have little interest in the existential. Yet I've noticed how crucial our view of the world is in the way we relate to ourselves and our inner-universe.

There's no escaping mindfulness and meditation are spiritual practices. They have the potential to transform your life and open you to another way of relating to yourself, the world, and others. They provide a bridge to divinity and a way of refining your spiritual senses.

When mindfulness and meditation are applied in its spiritual context, when committed to entering the rabbit hole, *then* the real treasure is revealed. My intention of sharing the following insights is to ignite, catalyse or mature your spiritual awakening. The nourishment you seek is a direct byproduct of becoming who you are.

If you don't see yourself as spiritual I encourage you to leave scepticism or intellectual analysis behind. I encourage you to move beyond the confines of the thinking mind and be prepared to explore the fullness of being by rediscovering intuition, sensing, instinct. Allow these ancient technologies to develop your understanding of who you are and the truth of reality.

These technologies have enriched my connection with the present moment, opened my eyes to the beauty of existence, unified me with the transcendent. They've strengthened me and made me more sensitive. They're practical tools to cultivate a deep love and appreciation for living and to handle hardship when hardship arrives.

I feel so lucky to have found a practice that supports, nourishes, and provides refuge. My life is rich, full of meaning, full of peace and full of joy – the majority of the time, at least! Finding this world was like uncovering treasure; how can I not want to share, to let others see the sparkling jewels?

I wish to provide you with a taste of this practice with a healthy dose of common sense. Results aren't quick or easy. I'm now in my thirtieth year on Earth. I first experienced depression 15 years ago, I've been a self-help junkie for 13 years and been meditating for close to eight years. I've been on the journey for some time and I've made sacrifices.

That being said, I was searching in the dark in the early days and had to find my own way, most of the time. I believe with the right guidance and a structured approach to self-development, results will arrive quicker.

But I can tell you with conviction that mindfulness and meditation isn't *medication* to rid yourself of symptoms. It's a lifestyle choice for significant change. If you're impatient and looking for a quick fix, know that you can continue looking but you'll never find it. So it makes sense to start playing the long-game as soon as possible, because the quest for quick-fixes only postpones the true beginning.

FINE-TUNING CONSISTENCY

This book condenses and categorises years of learning into 10 “mindsets” that navigate the complexities of the modern mind and keep the ego well-managed through the

awakening process. They're nudges to keep you going with your exploration into the deeper riches of reality and your true nature. However, they *aren't* a substitute for practice or application.

No matter where you are on the path these mindsets are reference points to avoid stagnation, overzealousness, or lapses of consistency. Calling upon these mindsets will fine-tune your inner-landscape for consistency and, I hope, cultivate the richest reward of consistent practice — falling deeply in love with life and becoming enchanted with the mystery, beauty, and miracles accessible right here, right now.

This book is split into two parts. The first section provides context. I define the benefits of mindfulness in clearing the mind before presenting the *Enchanted Worldview* — a reality that far exceeds the limited “consensus reality” of the West. Then we'll move on to the *Mindsets for Mindfulness* to provide instruction and keep your ego in check throughout the journey.

Are you ready to enter the rabbit hole? Excellent. Take a deep breath, relax, and give yourself permission to activate the parts of you long-hidden or ignored. Let your spirit guide you through these pages.

Let's begin.

Why Mindfulness?

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” – Viktor Frankl

Mindfulness is a remarkable tool for developing awareness and training the mind. Awareness, as Frankl implies, is the space between stimulus and response. This space is the gateway between living a purposeful life of your choosing or being governed by fears, anxieties and desires left unexpressed and unexplored.

Without training the mind we respond to unconscious thoughts or emotions before realising what we’re doing. With no space between thought and action, life is a *reaction*. What’s more, such thoughts and behaviours aren’t our own but inherited from external sources. *Reacting* to adopted thoughts is living unconsciously. It’s the opposite of freedom.

The nature of mind leaves a split-second to create space. The practice of mindfulness – particularly through meditation – breaks the chain of habitual, unquestioned reactions and thoughts. With increased awareness, in this split-second, we pause. The act of pausing transforms everything. It separates thought from action. It gives us the power of choice.

THE INSANITY OF THE COLLECTIVE EGO

“The insanity of the collective egoic mind, amplified by science and technology, is rapidly taking our species to the brink of disaster.” – Eckhart Tolle

From the moment we’re born we’re conditioned to place full attention on the external world and to listen to the story we’re told about the way things are. Just as DNA is passed

on in our genes, we inherit the psychic DNA of the culture we're born into. Rules, beliefs, and mindsets are passed on to us from our parents, schools, governments, religious institutions, pop culture. Most of this cultural DNA originates unconsciously and remains unquestioned unless we break the chain of reaction.

We live at a time of technological wonder yet painfully lack the technology to master our own minds. Mindfulness is an ancient technology that gives us the power to act consciously by noticing the space between stimulus and response. It has the power to allow us to quieten the mind's activity and see reality with a clear lens. It has the power to liberate us from the prison of the mind.

Neuroplasticity – the changing physical structure of the brain – translates to the subjective experience of mind. Without awareness the mind is rigid, static, like putty. Depression, for example, makes the mind dense, thoughts like syrup. Although a non-material, psychic realm, beliefs feel fixed and heavy. Emotional energy feels constricted, tense, suppressed.

Without awareness the contents of the mind are elusive and unexplored. Visions hazy, inner-dialogue dull. When feeling anxious, the mind may race, thought after thought occupying a small space, with a sense of claustrophobia and restriction. All of this we respond to energetically. So how does awareness change this?

Awareness, or pure consciousness, is the space behind all phenomena. Each of us is able to experience becoming the canvas on which thoughts, sensations, visualisations arise. With a narrow field of awareness there's not much room for phenomena to express and move. The borders of this canvas are small. As consciousness expands, the borders of the canvas expand with it.

Look at the night's sky and you'll see darkness peppered with beams of light from distant stars. Most of us don't realise our unconscious mind is the vast majority of our being; the conscious "ego," in the universe of you, could be represented by the Earth. As consciousness expands our experience of this inner universe expands too.

There's a spectrum from constriction to expansion, which fluctuates. But as consciousness grows, emotions, thoughts, sensations lose their hold. Now, I experience thoughts and emotions with "space" around them. This space reduces the influence thoughts and emotions have and allows the mind and body to settle.

Mindfulness is a practice to gradually enhance this space. In turn it boosts the quality of mind, purifies emotions, and adds plasticity and lucidity to thought. Better yet, with more space to observe, we begin to understand ourselves to a greater degree — because the ego itself is contained in the phenomena, not the canvas.

Mindfulness as a spiritual practice transforms and upgrades our reality. But first we must transform ourselves. Only by calming the mind can we begin to see and perceive the soul of the self and the soul of the world.

Defining Mindfulness

“We do not say what we see but rather the reverse, we see what one says about the matter.” —
Martin Heidegger

The popular definition of mindfulness in the West is full engagement with the present moment. In simple terms it's the *practice* of noticing thoughts, feelings and sensations with non-judgement. It's an instruction; not just a concept. Mindfulness is a translation of the Pali word *sati*, the state of pure awareness beyond mental activity.

I've discussed the idea of “normal” and “sanity.” Interestingly, our “normal” level of consciousness is often full of *mindlessness* and autopilot! Our minds are hives of activity, and without training and awareness, the clusters of thoughts, labels, beliefs, judgements — all forms of mental phenomena — create a veil over the direct experience of reality.

However, there is a risk spiritual concepts add to mental phenomena if the teaching is mistaken for the truth of experience. “Being mindful” can become a digested platitude for the intellect to chew over. Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, in describing the process of spiritual teaching, shares a useful metaphor to keep us on track:

“The teaching is merely a vehicle to describe the truth. Don't mistake it for the truth itself. A finger pointing at the moon is not the moon. The finger is needed to know where to look for the moon, but if you mistake the finger for the moon itself, you will never know the real moon.”

A spiritual awakening, spontaneous or cultivated through practice, is the sudden or gradual realisation of this illusion, the worlds beyond mental noise, the knowing of the real moon. You're probably familiar with *The Matrix*. The cult film is hugely inspired by

Buddhist philosophy, but rather than a computer-generated simulation, the illusion many Eastern traditions call *maya* is created by the mind.

Have you ever been stunned by a moment of lucidity? Where what you perceive takes on a glittering, enhanced quality? The clearer the mind, the clearer perception. Less judgemental, we distance from thoughts and emotions, allowing for increased clarity, and empowerment. Less distracted, we develop more understanding, empathy and compassion for ourselves and others.

Mindfulness places us in the driving seat of our lives, hands on the wheel, free to steer in any direction we choose. Mindfulness is a way to exit the illusion and live in truth by transcending judgements, interpretations, categories, labels to perceive reality free from distortion.

LIMITATIONS OF BUZZWORD MINDFULNESS

“No problem can be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it.” – Albert Einstein

Unfortunately mindfulness has become a commodity made to fit the Western story of reality. The practice of non-judgemental awareness has been manipulated into the pre-existing worldview. While there’s no denying its practical benefits for regulating emotions and improving wellbeing, it lacks the spiritual framework to flourish.

Buzzword-mindfulness, as I like to call it, is like driving a Ferrari around a supermarket car park — it’s potential is wasted because the car is built for the race track. Yes, mindfulness increases productivity, adds stillness to hectic lives and eases the navigation of modern, fast-paced living. But embracing mindfulness as a way of life to reach higher levels of consciousness is too life-changing, too profound to ignore.

Mindfulness separated from the wisdom of its original framework is diluted; it's the application of a life-changing tool as *medication* not *meditation*. It's without the context of the framework within which it was discovered, one which explores the fullness of the human experience, and suffering, with open arms.

This book embraces the spiritual framework and the Buddhist definition of *sati*, the experience of seeing reality as it truly is. But what is this moon the great spiritual traditions point to? When seeing clearly, what is revealed?

The Map Is Not The Territory

You might not spend too much time questioning the existential. However, my journey has made it apparent that there is no way to separate the quality of our wellbeing from the way we view the world, the universe, reality itself. Without conscious exploration our reality is adopted from cultural DNA, which has a drip-down effect on how we see ourselves.

Worldviews are maps of reality. They are stories. If you were born and raised in the West you will most likely have internalised the material worldview – the belief that only a material dimension exists. Let's call this the *Disenchanted Worldview* because of its view of the miraculous or spiritual aspects of being.

This predominant worldview was formed in the 18th century Age of Enlightenment, which elevated reason and the scientific method as truth. Mystery and magic were relegated to the realm of primitive make-believe as Newtonian physics seems to find a definitive answer: the essence of reality as mechanical and predictable and science is the demigod capable of providing all answers.

This story still influences our lives, despite the reality-shifting discovery of quantum physics almost a century ago. The study of subatomic particles is an exciting player in the awakening process. Quantum physics shows the fabric of reality is immaterial. It is energetic and influenced by consciousness.

British physicist Sir James Jeans wrote the below in 1937:

“Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading

towards a non-mechanical reality. The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as a creator and governor of the realm of matter.”

Mainstream science will eventually accept consciousness, not matter, is the fabric of existence. Esoteric teachings have known this truth for millennia. This is crucial to our understanding because most of us believe the unsubstantiated theory that consciousness is created by the brain as a miracle of biology.

What if the brain is a conduit for universal consciousness? What if in understanding ourselves we understand the universe? What if, rather than a form of “sanity” or “normalcy,” there were multiple dimensions of consciousness, accessible through working on ourselves? What if the external is no more real than the internal, and there is no fixed external reality?

All of this matters (pun intended) because the immaterial and universal is within *you*. The psyche isn't just a bizarre quirk of human consciousness but part of the fabric of the universe itself. This journey isn't just towards happiness or inner peace, but the discovery of universal truths.

THE ENCHANTED WORLDVIEW

A new map is needed. One which doesn't confine us to the material world or strip the spirit from nature. An individual's self-image adapts to their worldview. Can you remember when SatNavs were first launched and you'd hear stories of people following the directions blindly and ending up in the middle of nowhere? If your map doesn't match your experience, you will find yourself lost.

Imagine walking through a deserted landscape. Tired, thirsty, hungry and alone, you arrive at the foot of a mountain. At its peak you see the outline of civilisation. Between the clouds there appears to be another world; the lushness of forestry, the outlines of waterfalls, distant sounds of music and festivity. Every fibre in your being compels you to explore. You look at your map. There is no mountain. “Oh, this mountain must not exist then,” you say, and walk on.

When we internalise the material worldview this is what we do. We minimise the direct experience of the terrain and instead consult the map as if it were gospel, even at the foot of unmissable mountains. Yet each of us feels the compelling urge to explore the terrain. Each of us, somewhere deep inside, knows the map we have is leading us astray. This metaphor is one of the prevailing dysfunctions of the modern Western world, which has all-but erased spirituality from the map of reality.

Dissonance between your experience and your map will cause great inner conflict. As my awakening unfolded my experiences drifted further and further from the mental map I had of what was possible. The impossible conflict gave me a choice: to blindly accept the worldview I’d inherited, label myself as crazy or delusional and dismiss my direct experience... or search for a new map.

Different maps aren’t easy to find. Brick-by-brick I’ve built a worldview with accurate borders, inclusive of mountains. I call this the *Enchanted Worldview* — a worldview of intrigue, wonder, and magic. This map is inspired by mystical experiences and non-ordinary states of consciousness. It is influenced by maps from ancient spiritual traditions, quantum theory, transpersonal psychology, philosophy, and more.

Its blueprint is as follows:

- The mystery of existence is best understood through self-enquiry.

- The universe is a living organism.
- The universe is intelligent, benevolent, and supportive.
- The fabric of reality is immaterial, infinite, eternal, and beyond time and space.
- There are unseen, spiritual dimensions that exist beyond the mind's comprehension.
- Evolution is primarily spiritual and we are moving in the direction of higher and higher levels of consciousness, compassion, love, and peace.
- There is an innate yearning for each of us to return to wholeness and to enjoy union with the source of creation.
- A unique expression of this source is found within ourselves, it is our deepest, truest nature.
- Life is inherently purposeful.

THE MAP OF MADNESS

The cultural necessity of the Enchanted Worldview is that it transforms the way we perceive “madness” or mental illness. Rather than pathology or dysfunction, these are experiences of awakening. Rather than mistakes, they're course alignments, messages, guidance.

Mainstream psychology – that which shapes the consensus towards mental illness, madness or sanity in our culture – is born from the material worldview. This view pathologises experiences of depression, anxiety, psychosis. It suggests that there is a “sane” level of consciousness and that mystical experiences of oneness or connection to something greater are delusions.

I remember a questionnaire a close friend of mine – a woman with profound spiritual sensitivity and intuition – was given when looking to start therapy. Certain questions asked if she had experienced “feelings of something greater” or “sensed forces outside of

her control.” It doesn’t take a psychologist to read between the lines of why these questions were asked.

Sanity is a perspective and as we’ve touched upon, the Western view of sanity is one of rationality, reason, logic. It’s the ability to function in society, to play by the rules. In *Madness and Civilization*, French philosopher Michel Foucault explains the cultural shift in how we view madness. The defining moment? In the 18th century – around the time of the age of reason – madness became institutionalised.

Prior to this cultural shift sanity was viewed differently. There was even a distinction for divine madness, which Plato described as a “gift from the Gods.” Many religions talk about divine madness as a form of religious ecstasy. Clearly, there’s more to madness than meets the eye.

LEARNING TO SWIM

A shaman enters a trance state which would be defined madness by Western society. Yet this is skilful and deliberate and unlike mental illness, the shaman is in control of the experience. Great spiritual sages and mystics would be qualified insane from one perspective, enlightened from another. One of my favourite quotes is from writer Joseph Campbell:

“The psychotic drowns in the same waters in which the mystic swims with delight.”

When I first read this my body was covered in goosebumps. I used to drown. But by some miracle I learnt how to swim. I learnt not to be afraid of the water and realised the water is sacred. But let the metaphor of water carry an important lesson of the need for

psychological safety. Submerging in the ocean of higher consciousness does not come without risk – even strong swimmers can be swept away by strong tides.

If you're just about managing a few lengths at your local pool, it's best not to attempt swimming the English channel – but know the ocean is vast and has to be respected and understood. I can't talk for sages or yogis, but when I've been swimming for some time, I need to come up for air, to return to land and rest on safe harbour.

Mental illness is a sudden shove in the back into the waters below – unprepared, there's a risk we will drown. Many do. To make the task more daunting, our society lacks adequate instructors. Many, like me, learn the hard way and teach themselves. Our world desperately needs a syllabus to teach us how to swim.

In transforming our approach to mental illness we must navigate from a different map to teach others. Learning to swim takes time and patience, and requires a spiritual practice to slowly acclimatise. The Enchanted Worldview is a map and the Mindsets offer instruction, but you can only *learn* to swim once you're in the water and feel what it means to float.

THE EVOLUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY

A deficiency of the Disenchanted Worldview is its lack of the transcendental, a reality beyond the individual ego. Religions across time and space offer frameworks for the sacred, unifying the individual with the divine. But there are other maps in the West, as psychology evolves toward the transpersonal.

The founder of analytical psychology, Carl G. Jung, explored the psyche beyond just an individual ego and subconscious, into a vast ocean of unseen, psychic forces, connected to what Jung calls the collective unconscious. Jung was particularly interested in the link

between psyche and matter and held regular conversations with quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli and Albert Einstein – a reminder of the link between psychology and worldview.

Abraham Maslow – the psychologist best known for creating the hierarchy of needs – explored “peak experiences,” non-ordinary states of consciousness that are timeless, expansive and spiritual in nature. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s flow state is reminiscent of spiritual experiences, whilst transpersonal psychology explores the psyche as part of the cosmos and human potential far beyond current belief.

Pioneers of transpersonal psychology, Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof, co-created Holotropic Breathwork (“holotropic” meaning “return to wholeness”), a technique to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness, reminiscent of shamanic rituals or trances. Three decades of research prove its breathtaking (pun also intended) healing capability. Having attended a workshop, I can vouch for its power and beauty.

And despite its suppression in the 1960s, psychedelic research is making a resurgence.

The map of a world without spirit or magic is losing its credibility. The more we evolve, the closer we will come to reclaiming a fuller approach to mental illness; we’ll see that our society and its structure limits the innate urge towards healing, on a mental and spiritual level. We’ll rediscover the wisdom of the ages and the unavoidable truth of the transcendental realm.

I’m sure in our lifetimes we’ll see a newer map develop, one which is informed from direct experience. With this map the way we approach mental illness will radically change. Rather than seeing people as broken, mental illness will be viewed as part of a wider process of awakening. Adequate support and techniques will be taught, as the definition of insanity becomes redundant.

Remember, the finger pointing to the moon isn't the moon. A map is only a guide helping you navigate the terrain. But before we continue, give yourself permission to explore the map of enchantment – where the human potential isn't limited or restricted to the ego or the body or the material.

Give yourself permission to explore your full potential beyond the mind's limitations.

Who Are You?

“Knowledge of man is the beginning of wholeness, but knowledge of God is perfect wholeness. Therefore, as it seems, it is the greatest of all disciplines to know oneself; for a man knows himself, he knows God.” – Clement of Alexandria

Mindfulness and meditation connect with the divine spark within, refining your spiritual sensitivity to rediscover the parts of yourself not limited to the material (*body*) or the intellectual (*ego*). Many of the world’s greatest philosophers used self-enquiry to explore the truth of existence.

Having chosen death over exile, Socrates' last words were: “the unexamined life is not worth living.” I don’t fully agree. Socrates’ words are saturated with truth but they’re harsh. It may be presumptuous to alter the dying statement of one of the world’s greatest philosophers, but I will anyway. “The unexamined life is not *lived fully*.”

Spiritual work is a process of examination. *All quests begin with a question. All questions are quests.* The question is: who are you?

A self-image is the sum of smaller parts. Identities formed through the prism of the *Disenchanted Worldview* are in their nature identified with material form. Identity is *what we do* – our age, occupation, appearance, likes, dislikes, and *how we do it* – our personality, behaviour, thoughts, or emotions. Believing any of these “parts” to be the sum total of who we are is mistaken identity.

CHALLENGING EGO

“The first half of life is devoted to forming a healthy ego, the second half is going inward and letting go of it.” – Carl Jung.

Self-enquiry through meditation and mindfulness starts to unravel the illusion of ego. Without examination the inherited DNA of thoughts, emotions and beliefs – about ourselves and our place in the world – are taken as gospel. This is not reality but a kingdom of deception that has become internalised and formed part of our identity.

The Matrix is the collection of concepts that forms a consensus reality within which our ego identity forms. However, the role of ego in spirituality and development is misunderstood. It is often seen as an enemy to be killed or annihilated, yet this approach causes an inner-conflict as we reject a part of ourselves. Rejecting ego gives it an identity as something worth rejecting.

Instead of the ego self-image becoming a limiting view of who we are, the ego is a versatile, valuable function of the intellect. It allows us to navigate the modern world. It provides continuity in ourselves and our lives. It is the discerning faculty and is a powerful ally in the quest for growth. The late American spiritual teacher, Ram Dass, sums it up by saying:

“The ego is there, as our servant. Our room is there. We can always go in and use it like an office when we need to be efficient. But the door can be left open so that we can always walk out.”

We don't want to kill it or annihilate the ego; that would render us insane in the definition of not being able to function. Swimming, in Campbell's metaphor, is knowing how to harness the ego and use it as a function without believing it is who we are. If we

see ego as our identity we become our thoughts and emotions, and our being is confined to the physical body and the material world.

Part of our evolution is to create a healthy ego identity; to know “I” am separate from “the world” on a material level. Once born and entering the world independent from the womb for the first time, we develop an ego to survive. This psychological grounding is needed before consciousness evolves and we can use the ego to let go of this protective layer.

Self-enquiry is a life-long commitment to understanding the truth of who you are and letting go of what is false or illusionary. Meditation is a microcosm of this letting go process; we learn to observe, accept, and let go of phenomena. Eventually, this practice permeates the conceptual level of reality (labels and judgements) and self-image (ego).

Familiarising yourself with the impermanent, ever-changing nature of mind shows the illusion of reality we hold onto is far from fixed. And neither are we. As Buddhist philosophy explains – there is no fixed personality. This is one of the first steps in the path to freedom. Remember the description of mind being rigid, and loosening?

What happens when your self-image starts to loosen? *You* are not a fixed entity. *You* are ever-evolving and eternal. Limiting self-beliefs or stories of who you are begin to dissolve, and new imaginations and dreams of who and what you can become emerge, unhindered by distortions.

Mindfulness allows us to let go of the story of ourselves, to break the habit of who we have become, to see that the potential for personal evolution is limitless.

THE DIVINE PLAY

“Everything changes once we identify with being the witness to the story, instead of the actor in it.” – Ram Dass

Is all this talk of illusion and transience and no fixed reality a little scary? Let me reassure you. The transition from attachment to the material world into deeper, spiritual realities is painful. But the process is like pulling a plaster from sensitive skin; the pain is provoked by the process of removal. As we learn to rest in spirit, we become less attached we are to the material, sensory world.

In Hinduism, *Lila* refers to the “divine play.” All reality is the creative play of the sacred absolute — this collective, non-dual consciousness behind all of existence is called *Brahman*. The divine self, discoverable by self-enquiry, is *Atman*. Awakening is realising the *Atman* and *Brahman* are one and the same.

The facade covering our inherent divinity is what Hinduism refers to as the *Avatar*. This roughly translates to the “divine descent” from heavenly to earthly realms. Although the term usually refers to great spiritual teachers sent to share insights into our spiritual nature, each of us are divine sparks operating behind the facade of ego.

A spiritual awakening is the awareness of this divine spark. Spiritual practice is a commitment to building a relationship with this divine spark. Your spirit is waiting to be discovered. Genius sculpture Michelangelo said of his creative process:

“Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculpture to discover it. I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.”

Self-enquiry carves the marble and frees the angel inside. Once free, life flows from authentic foundations. Atman becomes our character. It's the divine spark, the twinkle in the eye, the spring in the step. It provides meaning, purpose, and alignment with something bigger than ourselves. It is a life lived beyond the separation of ego.

BUILDING CONVICTION IN THE TRUTH OF WHO YOU ARE

I love *The Truman Show*, the 1998 movie starring Jim Carrey. It's a profound metaphor for the process of spiritual awakening and feeling the pain of letting go and the innate yearning to discover our authentic world. Like Truman's realisation he's living in a reality TV show, self-enquiry explores backstage of *maya* to see the lighting rigs and read the scripts that unconsciously fuel our behaviour.

When no longer acting under the influence of unconscious thoughts you're able to simplify, excavate, drill down to the core of being, the core of what makes you feel most alive. In this space truth emerges, away from the influence of family and friends, your teachers, role models, TV or Hollywood or the radio pages of magazines. This truth is unique to you. This is your path. This is who you are.

Finding this truth isn't easy. Building a life around it is harder. Truth doesn't play by society's rules because each of us is unique. Carving marble isn't a quick fix. It requires the rejection of peer pressure. It requires resilience when faced with the expectations of others. It requires acting in alignment with our own truth, sometimes in defiance of those we love. It requires ceaseless examination and staying true to yourself no matter what.

Don't be deceived by this fully grown adult introducing this book by using words like magic and mystery: spiritual growth isn't positive thinking or promises of a magic solution to everlasting happiness. Genuine healing and growth require an exploration of

darkness, the “shadow work” to shed the layers of skin, to allow the light to shine through.

So why do it? Because the reward of growth and freedom is beyond comparison. To find wholeness in a world of separation, to live in truth in a kingdom of deception, is the greatest gift you can give yourself, and the world. And I know the journey is calling you. I know you have the courage to take this path. So let’s take another deep breath. It’s time, my friend, to explore the [Mindsets for Mindfulness](#).

*Meditation is just a courage
to be silent and alone.
Slowly slowly, you start feeling a
new quality to yourself,
a new aliveness,
a new beauty,
a new intelligence
which is not borrowed from anybody,
which is growing within you.
It has roots in your existence.
And if you are not a coward
it will come to fruition,
to flowering.*

— Osho.

The Middle Way Mindset

“The road to excess leads to the palace of wisdom... You never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough.” – William Blake

The Middle Way was taught by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. In a moment known as “The Great Renunciation,” Gautama calmly abandoned his life of leisure, giving up his status, wealth, and possessions. His initial attempt at awakening was through asceticism, an extreme form of self-discipline.

Six years of little food, little sleep, little interaction, and hours and hours of meditation each day took their toll; Gautama collapsed in ill health. After this worrying wake-up call he realized another important truth — an extreme, unbalanced approach would never lead to enlightenment.

Gautama knew a balanced approach was essential to reach Nirvâna. At the age of 35 he sat beneath The Bodhi Tree, determined to meditate until he reached enlightenment. After 49 days he became The Buddha (The Awakened One). He then saw things as they really are, leading to his formation of The Four Noble Truths, a philosophy on a path away from suffering.

This principle formed the foundation of Buddhism. The Noble Eightfold Path is a central teaching in this philosophy. This “path” avoids sensual self-indulgence and self-mortification. Its ethos: *balance*. This practice reduces *attachment* by avoiding the extremes of indulgence or aversion to thoughts, feelings, sensations. It’s a practice in becoming the awareness behind all phenomena.

Balance and equanimity are a huge cornerstone of spiritual growth. Hindu philosophy talks of *sattva*, a state of equanimity and peace. The ancient Chinese philosophy of

Taoism symbolises balance with yin and yang. The Roman philosophy of Stoicism emphasises the importance of temperance and attaining tranquillity by attaining freedom from passion. Balance and equanimity teach us not to become attached.

THE UNIVERSE OF MIND

Equanimity is at the core of the Buddha's meditation technique of Vipassana (insight). This practice develops mindfulness, or *sati*, for prolonged periods of time. It explores awareness beyond the usual mental activity. Meditation is a light that illuminates the contents of the inner-universe through spiritual practice, concentration, study, insight, understanding and wisdom.

The Middle Way approach is one of the most practical techniques I've used. I learned the ropes with mindfulness-based meditation and my first retreat was a 10-day Vipassana. When you start it's alarming to notice how incessantly the mind will attach or resist, over-and-over. However, as concentration develops the fuse between "observer" and "phenomena" eases.

So much distress is caused by wanting things to be a certain way. Mindfulness is a core component of spiritual growth because it is a fundamental practice of embracing the present moment, the ways things are. By letting go of ideas and concepts of how things should be, our hearts open to a new sense of appreciation beyond the illusion of reality.

Non-judgemental curiosity allows us to observe the mind with clarity. Equanimity allows us to become the observer of the universe within. Over time the inner-universe becomes increasingly lucid. As *sati* develops and consciousness expands, we note subtler and subtler elements of mind. This process is restorative and healing, like a purification of the excess mental pollution we subconsciously absorb in our day-to-day lives.

By becoming the observer we no longer confuse the contents of mind with who we are. The German language has a brilliant word, *kopfkino* which means “head cinema.” As the observer we can learn to grab the popcorn, sit back, and enjoy the movie. Better yet, we can become enchanted by the experience of our unique universe.

If we take this approach we begin to enjoy the ride as galaxies of thoughts, images, sounds, voices, emotions, sensations appear, worlds within worlds. To quote Roy Batty in *Blade Runner*, “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.”

Your inner universe is a rich territory only you can explore. Your unique experience of the divine play will be lost in time like tears in rain. As we observe our clarity enhances and the imaginal develops a numinous quality. Meditation becomes an interstellar, awe-inspiring quest to galaxies, solar systems and planets of unspeakable beauty, where treasures of creativity, insight, magic, and mystery reside.

The Beginner's Mind...set

In Zen Buddhism *shoshin* means “beginner’s mind,” an approach of openness and curiosity no matter where we find ourselves on the path. “In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities,” Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki writes in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. “In the expert's mind there are few.”

The Beginner’s Mindset prevents one of the biggest ego traps of all: believing our own hype. Connecting with the divine spark, with *Atman*, is a reminder of our true essence. But it doesn’t erase the fact we’re still human. It doesn’t mean there’s a final destination where we stop taking responsibility.

Vigilance and self-assessment are essential on the spiritual path. As we develop it’s likely we’ll oscillate between higher levels of consciousness and old patterns. Without a core spiritual practice we might get carried away, stagnate, or spiritually bypass our humanness.

The Beginner's Mindset is a valuable grounding tool. The rabbit hole of new dimensions contains treasure but it also contains smoke and mirrors, bright lights and razzmatazz, all of which can distract us from spiritual work. These include moments of ecstatic bliss, visualisations, powerful synchronicities, enhanced perception, overwhelming experiences of oneness.

Such experiences are a potential hazard because “elevated” states make us susceptible to feeling a sense of loss and rendering “ordinary” states insufficient. We might crave the return of bliss or expansion and when they’re present fear their disappearance. These experiences are phenomenal and life-affirming, but we have to be aware of becoming attached.

A PROCESS OF FAITH

Spiritual growth is cyclical. The absolute focus has to be a consistent practice that is followed during the “highs” and the “lows.” Peak states and enhanced consciousness becomes increasingly present and stable, but the work is always in the practice. Let the results take care of themselves.

My first reality-shift was the awakening to unconditional love (around the time of my psychosis) and spiritual ecstasy (without drugs!) which was overwhelming and ungrounding with occasional moments of stability. Eventually this experience levelled out as I matured in my practice, strengthened my ego, developed spiritual maturity and healed old trauma.

The acute phase of my psychosis lasted just over a year but echoes of psychosis continued a long time. If I’m particularly off-track or low on energy they can still ripple slightly now. My first experience of swimming in those waters was a real challenge because it thrust me into a reality so far removed from all I’d previously known.

Some years later I experienced a “psychic” awakening. My mind was illuminated and pulsing with lucidity. The world literally came alive – the trees, the sky, the Earth, the cosmos itself. I was walking around in awe and wonder at the psychedelic treats on offer, every day was sprinkled with impossible synchronicities. Contrast this to 18-year-old me staring at my bedroom ceiling in anguish of life’s lack of meaning.

In addition, my inner-world erupted vibrantly. I was experiencing visions in meditation, spiritually-themed lucid dreams, and my creative impulse exploded – a fountain of ideas burst forth, completely autonomous from conscious thought. This quality of thinking

was foreign to me at the time; the best I could do was witness them and quickly scribble as much down as I could.

THE ALLURE OF MYSTICISM

Can you see the issue here? Without Beginner's Mind it's intoxicating. It's beautiful and a gift to behold but the first time this reality emerged I was carried away by it. I love that I was: it was necessary. But these states, like everything in life, are impermanent. And if attached, we'll feel the gut-wrenching loss.

I've been asked during events and talks if I still experience depression. It's a brilliant question with no "yes or no" answer. The truth is my paradigm of experience, the *Enchanted Worldview*, doesn't accommodate "depression" in the way it used to. Some days the darkness is just there; I feel heavy and constricted, my mind's overactive and running scripts from years ago.

At times I question whether I'll experience said states again. But this is where the work is: *to bring ourselves home, over and over*. Experiences of higher consciousness, be it spontaneous or a gradual emergence, have to be integrated. Coming from a background of mental illness I know all-too-well the importance of psychological safety throughout the expansion process, which is often overlooked in the West.

Dissociation – *ego death* or *Dark Night of the Soul* – is possible without integration. Rather than spiritual maturity this is a fragmentation of the self, a form of spiritual bypassing. For wholeness, balancing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bodies is essential. *Shoshin* is necessary to remain grounded in all dimensions and over time new realities become increasingly stable.

HOW THE EGO HIJACKS SPIRITUALITY

The ego is versatile. Remember, spirituality is beyond language; it is the moon. Yet our experiences are always informing our concepts and our concepts (without mindfulness) can shape our experiences. Without vigilance, spiritual ego develops, and “*I am spiritual*” becomes an ego-identity.

Separation returns by placing oneself as superior to those who “aren’t spiritual.” Anyone who isn’t “aligned” might be seen as inferior. This forgets the fundamental truth that all are sacred. And it’s not for us to judge an individual’s journey or process. If spiritual practise becomes a form of ego-stroking or superiority it loses its divine essence.

Another way the ego causes separation on the spiritual path is judging the state of the world. World affairs do become increasingly perplexing when waking from ignorance. I remember constantly asking myself: “*how can we live this way?*” But acceptance is required to have compassion for where we are in our current evolution of consciousness.

You know the quote: be the change. When we witness ignorance in others or suffering in the world our choice is to respond by being the light. *Shoshin* is the precursor to exploring the space of love, joy, ease, and harmony, fully aware the inner flame has the potential to light infinite souls, guiding them to burn bright, too.

The Learner's Mindset

“Be patient with yourself. Self-growth is tender; it's holy ground. There's no greater investment.” — Stephen Covey

A supportive learning environment is crucial for self-enquiry. Solitude and time in silence — to various degrees — is necessary. This doesn't mean 40 days and 40 nights in the desert, but it does mean taking steps to cultivate space to rid the mind of external influence.

The challenge is that our society views solitude, silence and reflection as low-value when compared to productivity, socialising, consuming, and chasing distraction. However, at the time of writing this book, the coronavirus pandemic changed our way of living drastically and self-isolation became a new normality.

The lasting effect of this global disruption remains to be seen. My hope is that it has directed many towards themselves. That being said, not all solitude is skilled or in service of spiritual development.

THE TWO TYPES OF SOLITUDE

“Living in solitude now and then, repeating God's name and singing His glories, and discriminating between the Real and the unreal — these are the means to employ to realise God.” — Sri Ramakrishna

There are two types of solitude: *skillful* and *unskillful*. When depressed, I spent many hours in purposeless, unskilled solitude. It consisted of anxious rumination, self-pity, Jeff Buckley music on repeat, Lars von Trier movies, Pom Bears, chocolate chip cookies, and perpetual existential despair.

It's okay to have periods of unskilled solitude and self-indulgence, but we want to avoid this becoming habitual because unskilled solitude lacks awareness. Conversely, *skilled solitude* is a spiritual practice filled with purpose and intent. It's an active process distinct from relaxation or "switching off" (both of which have their time and place).

Meditation is the classroom where mindfulness is refined and insight is gained free from distraction. Mindfulness is *meditation in action*; skills developed are applied to the outside world. How many people meditate to become great meditators? In truth, we meditate to enhance our lives, to deal better with challenges, to relate authentically, to develop spiritual wisdom and understand ourselves.

This is why it's important to apply the Learner's Mindset to every experience. The true test of spiritual practice is calling on these skills when faced with challenges. It's a wonderful marker of growth to feel the ego react to a situation, only to breathe, slow down, and choose to respond consciously and lovingly.

We are here to experience, learn and evolve. Have faith in this. Know that life is a rich playground for learning and not a single moment is wasted or regretful. With this understanding even times of hardship contain golden nuggets of wisdom. Eventually, our default response to any event becomes: "*I will learn and grow from this.*"

PRE-EXPERIENTIAL V.S POST-EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

There is significant value in gaining knowledge by studying the work of others. However, knowledge isn't power – the *application* of knowledge is power. Unless willing to integrate into experience, reading, watching, listening simply adds to the storage of information.

A Zen parable illustrates this vividly:

A university professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master quietly served tea, the professor talked about Zen. The master poured the visitor's cup to the brim, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflowing cup until he could no longer restrain himself. "It's full! No more will go in!" the professor blurted. "This is you," the master replied, "How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

Spiritual learning is different from conventional education. It's the process of *unlearning* the DNA we've inherited, or old habits or beliefs. At our very core resides an inner stillness and wholeness that doesn't need to be added to or changed. Suffering isn't a defect but a distortion of our true nature that has developed over time.

All spiritual knowledge by itself is superfluous. I tend to like it because I write and teach, and it's nice to add colour. But the aim of spiritual knowledge is to lead you back to yourself through inspiration or instruction. Because of this learning vs. unlearning dynamic, I split knowledge into *pre-experiential* and *post-experiential*.

Pre-experience knowledge comes before a direct experience. It is to be held lightly so as not to become a belief system. Its virtue is the inspiration in knowing what's possible; like the *Enchanted Worldview* discussed earlier. Applying pre-experience knowledge requires careful discernment – another example of the ego's useful function.

Post-experience knowledge comes after an experience. It provides context, especially if the experience is non-ordinary and outside of the scope of your current worldview. This type of knowledge was a game-changer for me because nothing shatters your disbelief more than a lived experience. Remembering the mountain metaphor? Post-experience knowledge is finding a map that fits the terrain.

It always makes me smile when I think of the concept of wishful thinking when related to spirituality. I've been so reluctant towards my spirituality! I wasn't reading books, hoping for experiences to happen; the experiences came looking for me. Despite repeated denial, my experiences were so reality-altering I had no choice but to seek post-experience knowledge.

The relationship between these two is one of trust. I build trust in sources if a teacher or philosophy demonstrates understanding of my experience. For example, if a teacher suggests a meditation technique that works and seems to map my direct experience, then I discern that their teaching of "*what's possible*" is likely legit — and allow that to guide whilst remaining vigilant.

THE WISDOM WITHIN

Knowledge has its role in spiritual growth but it is a poor substitute for true wisdom. The aim of knowledge is to guide us to ourselves because wisdom resides within — it is not taught. Mahāyāna Buddhism talks of a perfect transcendent wisdom, *prajñāparamita*, acquired by relinquishing attachments and seeing reality as it truly is.

Endless spiritual traditions talk of wisdom beyond the ego, beyond the intellect, beyond comprehension. Indeed our spiritual senses and intuition go deeper than the mind, with access to dimensions beyond the physical senses of sight, sound, taste, touch. We develop awareness of these spiritual senses with *insight*.

Keep in mind spiritual or mystical experiences don't *need* explanation, especially if they are personally meaningful. I happen to have an intellectual thirst for this nectar. I spent early adulthood thinking I was crazy, so learning alternative maps of reality validates what I went through and confirms what my intuition was trying to tell me.

I developed the *Enchanted Worldview* in part to satisfy my inner-sceptic. Often this voice returns as a restrictive ego function when I approach another stage of development or experience something otherworldly. Part of the spiritual path is differentiating ego resistance and healthy scepticism, which leads us to the next mindset.

The Sincere Scientist

Many of us are familiar with religious dogma. Rather than allowing individuals to seek answers themselves, institutions may declare authority over spirituality (a notion that is completely absurd). This collective, ego-driven approach denies any individual free access to their spirituality.

Religious dogma demands authority, creates hierarchies, strips autonomy from the individual, creates a set of “objective” and “external” rules which cannot be questioned, and minimises the individual’s freedom. Is this sounding remotely familiar to any other field?

Scientific dogma is less familiar but no less limiting on spiritual freedom. We live in an age of blind faith in “science” without questioning what science is or what stories we are told as unquestionable truth. The term *scientism* applies to the belief the scientific method will eventually answer all questions.

Scientism lacks sincerity because it has become an authority which cannot be questioned and meets all the criteria of religious dogma. It functions chiefly on what Rupert Sheldrake, biologist and author of *The Science Delusion*, calls the “illusion of objectivity” – the belief that science transcends human nature and scientists are noble crusaders of truth. The truth is science is heavily influenced by political and economic agendas.

The conspiracy theorist in me sees how the scientific method and reason became the perfect tool for control because men in white coats become gatekeepers for truth, just as pastors of past religions. Mystics and great spiritual teachers (Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, Rumi) have exclaimed for millennia that fundamental truths are discovered through self-enquiry. In the same way certain faiths ostracised the esoteric – such as the

Gnostics of Christianity whose scriptures were burned and censored – the scientific method gives the best possible excuse to eradicate the validity of self-enquiry.

There's no escaping in our heart of hearts, the essence of our being, we *know* there is more to this reality. Intuition tells us so, even when conflicting the intellect. In all of us there's a subtle voice that tells us of our true nature, despite what we hear or intellectually believe.

As we evolve the truth of existence will surface and a science which sincerely listens to this voice within will become a powerful ally.

THE UNION OF SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

Fortunately, science and spirituality are aligning. Quantum physics opens the door to a universe better fitting a vast mind, not a machine. I can't profess to be anywhere near an expert, but I know enough to confidently say quantum theory has scope for a spiritual domain.

Any genuine quest for truth, be it scientific or spiritual, has to be sincere – with no preconceived ideas or expectations. The word science is derived from *scientia*, Latin for *knowledge*. The Sincere Scientist mindset seeks knowledge with an open mind, paying close attention to the application of techniques and their results. Rather than jump to conclusions, the Sincere Scientist tests, monitors, adjusts, and repeats.

Mindfulness is verifiable through subjective experience, though the science of spirit is subtle. It's easier to monitor results with the physical body – an often overlooked aspect of spiritual growth. If you treat your body poorly, get little sleep, eat junk food, don't exercise, drink alcohol excessively, you can guarantee your spiritual practice and mental health will suffer.

Over the years I've researched the science of depression extensively and applied all I can before monitoring, testing, verifying. There were many times I felt imprisoned by depression or a hopeless victim of it, but I never stopped experimenting with ways to give me an edge, anything I could find to help, even a little.

The process of discernment remains the same as with other sources of knowledge: experiment with an open mind and see if it works. Allow scientific discoveries to inspire your experimentation process; nothing more, nothing less. Always give yourself the final say even if it contradicts the scientific consensus.

The Warrior of Acceptance

“Acceptance looks like a passive state, but in reality it brings something entirely new into this world. That peace, a subtle energy vibration, is consciousness.” — Eckhart Tolle

Mindfulness is a practice of acceptance, and acceptance is the foundation of spiritual life. Without acceptance we are constantly engaged in a game of comparison with the *way things should be*. Without acceptance it's impossible to be fully present, because the present becomes unsatisfactory.

Living in the present is acceptance of your current experience, regardless of how uncomfortable or seemingly unpleasant or mundane it appears. This applies to our circumstances and ourselves.

Acceptance is a precursor to change. Its opposite — resistance — is denial. Genuine self-improvement and spiritual growth cannot unfold if we are denying or resisting certain truths. Our egos often deny truth in pursuit of fantasy. Escaping the illusion of fantasy is an ongoing process.

The Warrior of Acceptance highlights a common misunderstanding. *The Bhagavad Gita*, a Hindu scripture written over 5,000 years ago, is one of the most influential spiritual texts in history. Fittingly, the narrative follows a conversation between Krishna and Prince Arjuna — a warrior.

Acceptance is often framed as submission or weakness yet it is an act of courage to embrace truth even when the truth hurts. Throughout spiritual development there will be many moments of conflict, crossroads that test our conviction in our path. Accepting

what is true to us, against the grain of convention, expectation, and our own fear is the act of a Warrior.

SERENITY, COURAGE, WISDOM

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” – Reinhold Niebuhr’s Serenity Prayer.

The moment I encountered the Serenity Prayer it became part of my life philosophy. It captures the dynamic between acceptance and action. The *Warrior of Acceptance* knows this. Rather than waste precious energy attempting to manipulate the world into the vision of “the way things should be,” the Warrior ruthlessly discerns what can be controlled and what can’t and acts when necessary.

Equally, the Warrior knows when to surrender to life’s flow. The Warrior knows when to accept that, sometimes, we just don’t know, we don’t have all the answers. It’s a delicate balancing act. But relinquishing the need to control the uncontrollable creates space to re-focus energy towards what is most meaningful.

The Triple ‘H’ Mindset

This mindset isn’t for professional wrestling techniques (if unsure, see Google), but applies to three qualities that serve every stage of spiritual growth — *humility*, *honesty* and *humour*. To be honest, I’ve lumped these together because they all begin with ‘H’ and I admire awesome alliteration...

The Triple H mindset keeps us grounded through the highs and the lows. It keeps us soft. It keeps us flexible. It prevents us from getting carried away with progress or hindered by stagnation. It keeps our feet on the ground when drawn to the stars and our imagination in the big when stuck in the small.

I place a high value on these traits because they catalyse growth, change, and the ability to remain open. They’re also underrated, as they act as kryptonite towards egoic tendencies that surface as we advance along the path.

NEVER LOSE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR

“Man suffers only because he takes seriously what the gods made for fun.” — Alan Watts

A sense of humour is a gateway to finding lightness and joy in life. Over the years my dad has reminded me: “No matter what happens in life, never lose your sense of humour.” It’s valuable wisdom. However bleak or dark or intense things become I always try to keep humour nearby.

The opposite of humour is seriousness. Seriousness is rigidity and cynicism is disenchantment. Both are concepts of maturity and adulthood filtered through ego. True maturity acknowledges existence — then laughs. Just look at the laughing Buddha or

Donnie Darko. In *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz highlights how ludicrous seriousness is:

“If you watch children when they are playing adults, you will see their little faces change. ‘Let’s pretend I’m a lawyer,’ and right away their faces change; the adult face takes over. We go to court and that is the face we see — and that is what we are. We are still children, but we have lost our freedom.”

The cosmos is not serious. Nature isn’t serious. It’s playful. Trees aren’t serious. Clouds don’t crave drama. Stars don’t judge. Birds don’t crave future fantasies or hold onto the past. Nature is lighthearted, though it’s difficult to see at times. Problems feel serious. Life is not. Seriousness prevents us from inviting joy and magic into our lives; the ingredients of enchantment.

Humour is a tool to disarm seriousness. That’s not to say there isn’t space for moments of seriousness when we find ourselves in spots where everything *feels* serious. I find myself slipping into seriousness from time to time and when I embody it, it feels like truth. It doesn’t feel good but it is a comfort zone because I don’t have to try.

But we must challenge seriousness as much as we can to avoid becoming bitter or encased in our own fortress of beliefs. Moments of seriousness mask emotions that haven’t been expressed or concerns which need to be consciously explored. As an outlook on life, seriousness manifests as superiority, righteousness, judgement.

That’s not to say there’s no room to act seriously. There’s a difference between serious as a noun, a verb or an adjective. Growth requires a serious approach to self-development, but when seriousness becomes our identity we shut ourselves off from beauty and oxygenise the ego.

BE HONEST, BE HUMBLE

Dishonesty keeps you stuck. Lying to yourself gets you nowhere, as no one grows through self-deception. It takes courage to have the honesty to see change is required (honesty and acceptance are close allies). This applies to our darker traits *and* our finer qualities.

For example, it's difficult to honestly accept feelings of jealousy or anger or superiority or possessiveness. Very recently I had to accept I was acting from pride in a close relationship and, basically, had to get over myself. Equally, we've been conditioned to see the acknowledgment of our positive traits as narcissistic.

The final of this trio, humility, safeguards the ego from self-aggrandising without self-rejection. It's the ability to accept the love of another fully or to accept generosity or compliments or good deeds. Rather than allow this to inflate the ego, humility keeps everything in check. As author Marianne Williamson says:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.”

Humility reminds us of the basic function of spiritual practice – to love and serve others while loving and serving ourselves. It keeps the balance of avoiding narcissism or delusions of grandeur. It's a buffer finding the sweet spot between excessive modesty and arrogance. It serves no one to play small but it serves no one to play big, either.

To quote Tool's *Lateralus*:

I embrace my desire to,
Feel the rhythm, to feel connected,

Enough to step aside and weep like a widow,
To feel inspired,
To fathom the power,
To witness the beauty,
To bathe in the fountain,
To swing on the spiral,
To swing on the spiral to,
Swing on the spiral,
Of our divinity,
And still be a human.

Humility is essential to bathe in the cosmic ocean, to sample the transcendental, to fathom the power, witness the beauty, swing on the spiral, *and* remain human. Without it these experiences can corrupt us and spark the return of spiritual ego.

The Compassionate Disciplinarian

“The biggest reason people aren’t more self-compassionate is that they’re afraid they’ll become self-indulgent. They believe self-criticism is what keeps them in line.” — Kristin Neff

The path of spiritual growth isn’t for the faint-hearted. It’s an odyssey into the deepest depths of yourself, an epic confrontation with ego, a true test of character. It’s no wonder the journey feels lonely at times. The reward is developing strength, resilience, and faith — in yourself and the universe.

Spiritual strength is forged in the furnace of suffering and life provides the lessons you are here to learn. But we aren’t here to punish ourselves or to take the route of asceticism. We aren’t here to become spiritual perfectionists or to sterilize ourselves, turn our back on the world or give up all of our possessions, reject what’s nice and pleasant, like pizza or a new pair of jeans.

Discipline is necessary but balance is key. The common approach towards self-discipline is imbalanced; it becomes a fight against ourselves. But rather than excessively push ourselves, the Compassionate Disciplinarian develops a vision that we naturally gravitate towards. Then self-discipline is *an act of compassion for the future self*.

THE LONG GAME: VISION AND VALUES

Modern living doesn’t require much self-discipline. We’re encouraged to want more, to chase dopamine highs with distractions and instant gratification, to be comfortable. Yet growth is a long game at odds with the quick-fix culture, and stretching ourselves outside of our comfort zone is, well, uncomfortable.

However, delayed gratification and self-restraint lead to a nourishing reward – the reward of self-sufficiency and independence from material pleasure. When it becomes clear that happiness comes from within, (not as an empty platitude but genuine practice) it becomes our mission. Then it's easy to tolerate short-term unpleasantness.

But most of us don't create a lucid vision of our North Star, that which we are working towards, that which gives us purpose and the strength to cultivate self-discipline and keep moving when the journey gets tough. When a clear vision is accompanied by clear values (a compass), then self-discipline becomes a breeze and sacrifice becomes enjoyable.

Vision is *what* the long-game is (i.e. meditating daily). Values are *why* the long-game matters (stillness, calm, spiritual connection). Without a clear vision, we drift through life with no direction. Without clear values, the compass pointing our direction, we struggle to follow our path. As American lecturer and author Terrence McKenna says, “if you don't have a plan, you'll become part of someone else's plan.”

Life is full of wishes, desires, agendas, beliefs, fears and hopes from other individuals, groups, cultures. It's easy to live a flat-packed, ready-made life without questioning if it's what you want in your heart of hearts. Mindfulness silences external noise, allowing the voice of truth to boldly say: *this is what I want*.

THE JOY OF SACRIFICE

“Sacrifice is the noblest form of action. Work performed in the right attitude of mind becomes sacrifice. Service is sacrifice. This level of sacrifice actually has divinity in it, performing it becomes a subtle yet powerful force. This makes life itself sacred.” – Bhagavad Gita (Jack Hawley translation).

The spiritual path requires sacrifice. This is a real test of commitment towards your vision and values. What are you willing to give up to follow your heart? This might be a mixture of worldly things – such as alcohol, meat, material belongings – or mental things, such as ideas or concepts that must be shed in order to grow.

When the sweetness of the divine is tasted, sacrifice is a joy. It becomes easier to say no when your North Star is freedom and happiness, separate from fleeting pleasure. When understanding the route to genuine fulfilment doesn't come from worldly pleasure but the divinity within, the desire to seek pleasure fades, the star shines brighter and brighter.

Discipline is commonly viewed as a form of restriction. Yet with practice a paradox becomes clear— *self-discipline is freedom*. It's why renunciation is part of all spiritual practices. I'm not talking about giving up the pleasures of life but exercising self-restraint within reason. Regardless, when self-discipline honours our core values, it is service, not sacrifice.

When I started meditating, pleasure-seeking habits started to lose their grip. It's common for a spiritual awakening to change your desires. You'll be drawn towards different sources of nourishment and look to change your diet. This isn't just food and drink but everything you consume: what you read, the information you absorb, what you watch, your environment, the conversations you have.

VALUES AND DISCIPLINE

Meditation surfaces spiritual values and the desire to live in agreement with these values isn't something you can ignore for too long. If you ignore or reject true values you will likely experience anxiety, depression, or general discontentment. Distress arises when desires conflict with your ego-identity.

Remember there is no fixed self. Revelations and insights that come with spiritual practice may surprise you. The resources, the subtle desires, your unique blueprint for living, is outside conscious control. Sure, resist! But a universal law is that when you stop resisting your true nature, and act in accordance with it, you will be rewarded with joy and a deeper appreciation for life.

Does this mean change is easy? Absolutely not. Changes face resistance from ourselves and others, especially when they are “out of character” or conflict social conditioning or cultural DNA. People will project their concept of “you” onto you. It’s mostly an unconscious process but illustrates why silence and solitude are necessary: to discover your truth away from projections.

The value of self-discipline is evident. Living aligned with your deepest truth requires conviction in your path even when your beliefs, attitudes and behaviour are called into question. Pay close attention to your energetic response. Sensitivity pinpoints a lack of conviction and more inner work to be done.

PERFECTIONISM AS A BARRIER TO DISCIPLINE

Perfectionism is an ego-trap. Without vigilance, discipline loses compassion.

Self-discipline can be imposed strictly to move away from what we don’t want, push ourselves to excel, be overly critical when we don’t meditate, blame ourselves for falling off track or not being “spiritual enough” when enjoying life’s sensory pleasures.

A big breakthrough in my self-discipline came when my coach guided me through an exercise to understand what was fueling perfectionist behaviour. I was asked to personify the disciplined aspect of myself. I saw a decorated soldier in my mind’s eye, resembling Lee Emery’s drill sergeant from Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket*.

This resource was created with good intentions but I'd internalised "discipline" to avoid self-sabotage; if I messed up I'd be punished. The irony was by pushing myself too much, I self-sabotaged! Compassionate discipline isn't militant but it is firm. It's the people-pleaser saying no, the workaholic taking a rest, the person experiencing depression cutting back on alcohol.

Discipline isn't a personality trait but enacted one decision at a time. There's no such thing as a *disciplined person*, just as much as there's no such thing as an ill-disciplined person. Labelling ourselves as either obscures the nuances of human behaviour and the ability to change.

When discipline functions well and becomes habitual it is a subtle-yet-powerful force. It creates a bond between your past, present and future self. You can look ahead with compassion for your future self. Or you can look back in gratitude towards the past self who made sacrifices for you to be here now.

The Divine Nonconformist

The *Disenchanted Worldview* disconnects us from such an essential source of spiritual nourishment, which begs the question: is all suffering a yearning to connect with our birthright – the source of unconditional love? Quite possibly, if we explore the etymology of religion.

In the 4th century Christian writer Lactantius chose the source as *religare*, Latin “to bind.” In *Divinae Institutiones* he wrote: “We are tied to God and bound to him by the bond of piety,” implying a bond with God is possible through devotion. Another suggestion from Christian theologian Augustine is *re-eligare*, defined as “choosing again” or “reconnecting” with the divine source.

The act of choosing again or reconnecting is beautiful: as all great sages remind us, we are born into this world forgetting who we are. We are “spiritual beings having a human experience,” and spiritual awakening is as simple as remembering our true nature, choosing again consciously. Devotion knowing this truth and committing to divinity.

GOOD GOD

The word God has many connotations. It can be difficult to sidestep the wealth of images, ideas, concepts, and likely resistance from the G-word. I often avoid using it for simplicity but I’m getting over it. In a Western religious context, God is best understood by the Christian *agape*, the “highest form of love” which is transcendent and universal in nature.

I relate to God as universal consciousness, a cosmic intelligence of which we are all a part, the beauty and presence beyond the senses. You can just as easily substitute the

word God with the Universe, Something Greater, the Creator, Life, Oneness, or whatever fits. What matters is the free will and independence to *experience* God in a way that is deeply moving and personal to you. Make it yours. Own it. Labels are inconsequential.

THE TWO APPROACHES: EXOTERIC vs. ESOTERIC

Religion is approached from two perspectives. The first we explored earlier: an institutionalised attempt to impose a worldview, i.e. belief systems, on its followers (*exoteric*). It's not personal and may require "blind faith." Spirituality is a unique relationship with God, developed through looking within (*esoteric*).

I had a strong dislike for religion because all I knew was blind faith, control, power, dogma. *Why should someone else tell me what to believe?* I used to think. I am eternally grateful to Roger Walsh's *Essential Spirituality*, a book I synchronistically purchased second hand. It was that book and Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* that opened my eyes to authentic spirituality.

I am a rebel at heart and I refuse to conform to a structure others choose for me. So, to discover spiritual practices and tools I could apply on my own terms, in my own time, at my own pace, was a revelation. In addition, Walsh's explanation of the thread of truth running through all religions gave birth to this particular Divine Nonconformist.

BEYOND LANGUAGE

Spirituality is beyond language. It is the deepest truth of existence. It's buoyant and joyous and reassuring and comforting. It's the foundation of faith and a potent antidote to anxiety, despair, hopelessness and lack of meaning. It provides refuge and support

during times of darkness. It is both a personal and universal experience, both subtle and profound.

On a very personal level, spirituality enhances the quality of our lives and how we relate to others. It teaches us how to become more compassionate, more caring, how to serve others, how to be more present to the beauty of life. Above all else, spirituality teaches us how to live and how to love.

The Loving Kindness Mindset

Metta bhavana is a Buddhist practice to cultivate loving kindness. Compassion is love with intent, the willingness to feel *and* take action to alleviate suffering in others and ourselves. What's most striking about the *metta bhavana* meditation is the inherent presence of love and compassion that bursts into consciousness, an experience which is rejuvenating, healing, and transformative.

Christopher Nolan's sci-fi epic *Interstellar* explores the powerful notion of love being the gravitational force, a dimension in itself. It's easy to dismiss as a Hollywood conclusion to an otherwise meticulous depiction of quantum physics. But in the *Enchanted Worldview*, unconditional love (not to be confused with romantic love) is a gravitational force.

Universal love is the cosmic guiding force of the evolution of our energetic universe. It's inextricable from consciousness, it's benevolent, nourishing, supportive, present, the *agape* mentioned previously. It's completely and utterly incomprehensible by the mind and impossible to capture in words.

Compassion is this force moulded by human hands; divinity in the microcosm, a sacred spark of kindness. Love conquers all. It brims with the truth of a reality we can live by facing us in every decision, every choice. The future of our world depends on our ability to love. Love harmonises with the heart and dissolves ego, like ice crystals melting in the warmth of sunlight.

Once tasted, even briefly, "re-connection" to this source of love has a significant impact on the psyche. Love is the nectar of the spirit and when nourished, transforms the way we see ourselves, the way we see others. Most importantly it transforms the way we treat ourselves and others.

THE WISDOM OF SELF-COMPASSION

Growing up, I put on a facade of confidence and nonchalance, particularly during high school, where I'd show off, rebel, be the class clown. I was hard on myself though, and often wished I were someone different. I believe a lack of self-compassion contributed to my struggle with mental health.

I vividly remember an occasion where I was contemplating ending my life. While in this self-destructive state of mind, constricted by depression, unable to see a way out, I was suddenly overcome with the sense of presence outside of myself. It jolted me out of the slumber, I came to my senses and received the message, even if I didn't understand it at the time.

Over the years I've wondered about the light that shone through in that moment. It was an act of grace. Since then I've built a relationship with this presence. Deep in meditation, I've familiarised myself with the seed of self-compassion, the guiding compass of the soul. During a Vipassana retreat this connection was particularly pronounced.

As I relived moments from my life I became aware of continuity in the presence behind the experience, the Self that was always with me, always there, no matter how I change or grow. I became aware this part of me was distinct from space and time, the glue holding together the linearity of my life, nudging me along, keeping me on track.

Self-compassion is the cultivation of the nucleus of loving-kindness within, the presence that supports your journey even when you forget it's there. It's the resilience we find in moments of hardship, the reminder to keep going, the light in all of us.

TRUE LOVE AND PRESENCE

Our presence is the best gift we can give. But full presence without distraction requires self-work; the untangling thoughts, purifying of emotions, the removal of mental distortions, the cultivation of self-compassion. Most of us see self-work as selfish, not realising it enriches the way we love and support others.

The act of love is a skill. Most of us are more familiar with conditional love, attached to outcomes, expectations, wants, needs, desires. Unconditional love is a gift as it is free from all attachment; it doesn't judge or select. In Buddhism there are Four Brahmavihārās, the virtues of love:

- *Metta* is caring for the wellbeing of others through loving-kindness or benevolence – the desire and ability to bring joy to others.
- *Karuna* is compassion (Latin: *compati*, “to suffer with”) – the desire and the ability to ease the suffering of another.
- *Mudita* is empathetic joy – the ability to celebrate others' good fortune rather than seeing others as competition.
- *Upeksha* is equanimity. Unconditional love is free from conditions and boundaries and, consequently, offers freedom to those you love. Without *upeksha*, love becomes conditional and possessive.

The Loving Kindness Mindset has two purposes. The first is a connection to universal love through spiritual practice. The second is to enhance relationships with ourselves and others through acts of true love – even when opening our hearts scares us, when the tenderness of vulnerability makes us shake, or when loving without conditions provokes the ego.

To consciously enact love is a miracle in this vast, eternal universe. The gift of life is that each of us has unsurmountable power to consciously direct unconditional love, to be vessels of the nurturing force of the cosmos, to play our role in the evolution and unfolding of the divine play.

The Modest Champion

“Even if the hot loneliness is there, and for 1.6 seconds we sit with that restlessness when yesterday we couldn't sit for even one, that's the journey of the warrior.” — Pema Chödrön

The final mindset is a reminder to celebrate each step of the journey. Spiritual growth is cyclical and progress is not always clear, particularly if we find ourselves at the lower ebb of a cycle. Growth is subtle in the present and becomes clearer in hindsight, like a vast landscape seen in its fullness in a rear-view mirror.

Be aware of the ego's tendency to *minimise* or *magnify* this journey. It doesn't mean you have failed if going through a difficult time or you are the reincarnation of Jesus if you act with compassion. I like to remind myself that “I” am not the centre of the universe, but “I” am the universe experiencing itself.

CYCLES OF ENCHANTMENT

Enchantment is cyclical. I get days where I wake up and the world looks flat and lifeless and I feel sad. I get spells of despair, emotional blockages, Dark Nights of the Soul, processes of ego death. The beauty is that the paradigm of enchantment is a safety net for these times: it reminds me these processes are purposeful, they're the growing pains of freedom.

Be vigilant of old thought patterns, emotions or behaviours resurfacing, but remember it doesn't mean regression; it means they've returned to be seen, explored and tended to from a different space of consciousness. Would faith be necessary if riding high all the time? Probably not.

Faith is the trust that, even when disenchanted, even when facing hardship, that things will work out, that you'll grow, you'll make it, you'll be okay. Faith is accepting the great uncertainty of existence and having the courage to let go and surrender, knowing we'll be supported and find ourselves anew.

Cycles of enchantment aren't inconvenient; they're necessary. Moments where I'm surrendered and downbeat are always closest to another level of development, a new insight, an ascension of consciousness. Self-doubt is a symptom of the old part of us dying, saying goodbye as we move onto what's true.

FROM BITTER POISON TO SWEET NECTAR

There is a tipping point. The *Bhagavad Gita* explains: "Like all things good, it is hard work in the beginning but sheer joy later — bitter poison at first, sweet nectar in the end." On the contrary, fleeting happiness from the material pleasures is "nectar at first, poison in the end."

Many, myself included, start spiritual work because of hardship, loss, grief, or a host of difficulties. But with dedication to the path, after putting in the work, sweetness surfaces. We might begin with the intent to rid ourselves of depression or anxiety or suffering, but eventually spiritual practices provide peace, meaning, joy, bliss, refuge, a sense of contentment that is stable and lasting.

If you're working through difficulties right now allow this to be a direct message of what's possible. When momentum builds and you've earned your stripes, your dedication and commitment to the path will lead you with ever-increasing tenacity towards the most beautiful experiences you're yet to have, those hard to imagine miracles hidden on the horizon, obscured from view, patiently waiting for you to arrive.

CELEBRATING PROGRESS

Don't forget to pause to reflect on the work you put in. Be your biggest supporter. Give yourself credit for your effort and always appreciate your journey from ground zero – that's where you've come from, not where you'd like to be. Enjoy the moments where you react differently or face a fear and notice the anxiety wasn't there or the mind falls silent or you sample the sweet nectar of oneness.

Reflecting on progress is a huge motivator. The Modest Champion celebrates without excessive pride and enjoys these moments without self-aggrandizing. The balance is acknowledging growth and moving towards a future vision without this vision distracting us from the present moment.

Picture a gold-winning, Olympic athlete, a born winner. This athlete is able to celebrate with passion, to digest praise with humility, to enjoy the highs. This athlete acknowledges areas in need of improvement not through self-pity but as motivation to continue to improve and grow.

The Modest Champion has high standards but they're realistic, at least for the super-ambitious. This mindset avoids crippling perfectionism – *"I need to be mindful all the time," "I should be feeling better by now"* – but moves along the path with purpose and determination, whilst dedicating themselves fully to daily practice.

THE JOURNEY HAS BEGUN

The fact you've read this book is worth celebrating. You've made a commitment to your own journey. You will get out as much as you put in. The harder you work, the greater the results. I encourage you to avoid the trap of using this book for intellectual entertainment. Flattered as I'd be if you have been entertained, this alone is not enough.

Applied knowledge is key. The map is not the territory but it is my hope this map inspires you to see what's possible and gives you the courage to take the next step. Further, by activating the Mindsets for Mindfulness, you will have worthwhile travel companions to call upon when the time comes.

The spiritual path is the greatest journey you'll ever take. It's an odyssey into the richness of Self, a waltz through the unconscious mind, an exploration of the spirit, a union with something greater, a dance with the divine. It's not all sunshine and rainbows, but aren't the greatest stories ones of overcoming adversity? Aren't the sweetest things worth fighting for?

This is your story, the unfolding of your potential, your crusade into a richer and deeper reality. You are the hero and the creator, the architect of your dreams, the cosmic force driving you towards your destiny. Stay strong in your conviction and always stay true to yourself.

Before you know it you'll look in the rear-view mirror, breathtakingly bewildered by the progress you've made, what you've experienced and never imagined possible, the person you've become, the limits you've transcended.

Looking ahead, as you enjoy the ride, you'll notice the path is paved with gold, the journey was always enchanted, and the magic was never lost.

A Final Word From The Author



Mindsets for Mindfulness is a book about self-enquiry. Yet support from others is priceless. During my disenchanted days as a young man in Bristol, I was afraid to talk about depression or anxiety. Over time I developed the courage to speak to family and friends. As I broke the silence and became increasingly vocal, something beautiful happened: *people opened up to me.*

The more visible I became, the more people reached out – sometimes for themselves, sometimes on behalf of others. These conversations were deeply meaningful, moving, and vulnerable. For the first time I felt meaning in what I'd experienced. I knew I wanted to dedicate my life to this purpose.

One night many years ago in a bar in Sheffield, someone asked me about my future plans. “I want to become a life coach,” I said spontaneously, which was news to me. But the seed was planted. I came up with the name *MindThatEgo* and purchased the domain in 2015. Moving abroad to Berlin not long after took my focus, and the website was left unattended for a few years.

Synchronistically, as I was re-investing in the website in 2017, I was made redundant from my full-time job – a sign to take the leap. Since then I've started a coaching business, I host regular talks, events, and meditation classes, and spoke at the acclaimed *Science and Nonduality Conference* in 2019 – not bad from a guy who used to have a panic disorder.

The ideas never end. At heart I am a writer, and I'm always producing new written content for [MindThatEgo.com](https://www.MindThatEgo.com), alongside video content on [YouTube](https://www.YouTube.com) and [Facebook](https://www.Facebook.com). I occasionally record new episodes of the *MindThatEgo Podcast*, too. So if you like what you've read, have a look around and consider subscribing on other outlets.

MY NORTH STAR

I have evolved since 2017 and MindThatEgo evolves with me. Talking openly about my mental health was challenging. As a former atheist and super-sceptic, owning my spirituality was harder! But every step of the way I have been encouraged and guided by the support and acceptance of others – something I truly cherish.

Although my initial focus initially was mental illness, one cannot escape the spiritual call. Begrudging, I've hauled my ego through the terrain of enchantment, one step at a time, screaming "*look at the evidence!*" every time I adjust my map of reality. Because this is an unconventional path, the journey can be lonely or daunting.

Ultimately, my North Star is to stand alongside others on this journey. Perhaps, having read this book, you would like support. It's an honour to be a guide, to teach people how to swim, to help navigate the terrain. So, get in touch if you resonate with my words and my message and would like to explore working together.

Maybe you'd just like to send feedback or ideas, to share your story, or simply say hello. Either way, I would love to hear from you, so feel free to contact me at ricky@mindthatego.com.

Finally, thank you so much for taking time to read these crazy ramblings and, more importantly, joining me on the quest into the enchanted world of mystery and magic.