

A woman stands on a beach at sunset, her silhouette reflected in the wet sand. She is surrounded by a large flock of birds flying in the sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The text "Help Bring about a New Earth" is overlaid in large white letters.

Help Bring about a New Earth

SERAFIN D. TALISAYON

Help Bring About a New Earth

Serafin Talisayon

January 2021



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FOREWORD

COVID-19 pandemic, typhoons, and floods in 2020 led to lessons learned, and individual and group reflections: insights from experiences focused on medical issues and preparedness, quarantine relationships with family and friends, climate change and impacts on Mother Earth, livelihood loss and economy recovery, and changes in one's psyche.

This book, *Help Bring About a New Earth*, shares and offers personal experiences for your own self-reflection and suggests actions for self, family, and society. Bringing about a new and better *you* well as a New Earth after 2020 starts with oneself and may proceed as a continuous community effort by the grace of God (or by any other name for the Supreme Being).

This book calls us to simple and creative actions of love and kindness. It is hoped that this experiential book will serve as a guide post in our journey and that of the rest of humankind toward a New Earth of greater hope, peace, joy, and love. Happy reading!

Vivien M. Talisayon

Quezon City, Philippines

3 January 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I thank Yeshua and His many helpers for guiding me in the course of conceiving and writing what is now this book. Like my two previous books, the production of this book benefited from many synchronistic and seemingly coincidental insights and inputs from them. Ideas that went into this book came from various sources: my dreams, the ideas that pop in my head just before I wake up, seemingly random YouTube videos that show up in my laptop, Internet chats with my sister, news items that I come across conveying the right idea, and so on. These come to me at the right time that I do not believe in coincidence anymore.

Secondly, I thank Vivien my wife for graciously writing the Preface. Her perspectives and those of my three sisters that they shared during our regular video chats were valuable inputs in helping me frame a more balanced and empathetic approach in this book.

Lastly, I thank my co-founders of CCLFI or Center for Conscious Living Foundation: Babes Afable, Jo Bilasano and my daughter Diwa Leilani. For over two decades, they were my partners in building the Center and in developing and enriching many of the "conscious living" practices that echo throughout this book. They were my supporters and cheerleaders along our CCLFI journey. I am thankful for the support of my other CCLFI colleagues and for CCLFI itself as publisher of this and other public service books that CCLFI freely shares to others.

PREFACE

Dear friend,

I am rarely on Facebook (FB). Last March 2020 when the pandemic was spreading around the world and lockdowns were declared in the Philippines, I received emails from my students. They were honest in confessing that they were confused, scared, or getting depressed. I decided then to start a series of FB posts on how to manage fear. It was well received by many FB friends with over a hundred likes or comments. Encouraged, I started a second series on how to better listen to people. I kept writing more series of FB posts up to late December 2020.

The many comments from my FB friends were heartening to read. My style is to avoid preaching or advising. I tell stories about my experiences and practices that worked well for me. "The shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story" according to Fr. Anthony De Mello. I tell the stories as a way to offer readers new options they may be interested to try out.

Around mid-April 2020, I decided to create a website where the FB posts can be re-read by others who may have missed them. The website "Midwives of the New Earth" was born. I summarized my approach in the homepage of the website:

- More practice (showing how) than preaching (telling “shoulds”),
- More about your action here and now than about what leaders, governments or others should do,
- More first-hand knowledge from experience than second-hand knowledge from reading or hearing, and
- More of personal or internal solutions than socio-political or external solutions.

It came to me last November 2020 that I should convert the website into a book that can be widely and freely shared with others. Another book project was born: this book you are reading now. It is a more organized and edited version of the contents of the website.

This is my 2021 New Year gift to my friends, YOU.

INTRODUCTION

The series of FB posts I started on Christmas eve of 2020 encapsulates the intent and content of this book:

MAY DIVINE LOVE BE BORN IN OUR HEARTS

- Yeshua (or Jesus) was born amidst dire, humble, and dangerous circumstances.
- No lodging for a weary traveling couple was available.
- He was born in an unknown, remote and humble manger amidst animals and shepherds.
- No one—except three men from afar guided by a rare star—recognized Him.
- Upon Herod's orders, soldiers were searching and killing male babies.
- His family had to hide and quickly flee away to Egypt.

This Christmas, we are living amidst similarly dire, humbling and dangerous circumstances. The rare star has reappeared—seemingly to remind us.

May the one true Divine Love be born in our weary humble hearts and may we thereby help bring about the New Heaven and the New Earth in Yeshua's prayer: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

This FB post was the start of daily posts during the week from Christmas 2020 to New Year 2021. I called the series "Help Bring about the New Earth." They bring together and tie up all previous FB posts since March 2020 into a sequence of steps. Below are the daily FB posts in that week, detailing steps you can consider if you wish to help bring about the New Earth.

Step 1: Total Surrender

Paradoxically, the more dire and dangerous these times are, the greater is the opportunity to allow Divine Love to be born in our weary, humble hearts. It happened in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. It is happening again now. From my experience, this change inside is the route to help bring about a New Earth outside. It is not about doing something out there. It is all about doing something to change our perspectives and ourselves. Pope Francis said it pointedly: "Christmas is You."

My journey started in September 1987 when multiple life-threatening illnesses were suddenly healed and Yeshua gave me a "new heart" after I made a fateful decision: *it is not my will anymore, it is Your Will I will henceforth follow*. My ego-mind gave up and surrendered totally. In short, the first step in this journey is total surrender. If you have not reached this decisive point in your life, can you consider it doing now?

Read about my story of total surrender in Chapter 1.1 of [*Healing our Divided Planet: Stories of Transboundary Learning for our Grandchildren*](#). You may download the e-book for free from the Community and Corporate Learning for Innovation (CCLFI) website.

Step 2: Listening to God

Start 2021 with a fresh and clean slate, a new beginning, a really new year—a NEW YOU.

After a total surrender to God's will, the next step is to know God's will. The Scripture—whichever religion you belong to—is the usual good start. However, it is a generic formula. From my experience, I know that God has a plan SPECIFIC for me. He must also have one for you. How do you discern it?

The early Christians practiced discernment through *rhema* (a Greek word which means “heard Word of God” versus *logos* or the “written Word of God”) at a time when the Bible was not yet written, screened/decided upon, and translated. You can take up their practice, too. I have practiced listening to *rhema* and have been guided by the Holy Spirit since 1987. This and other beautiful practices are explained in Chapter 1 of this book.

This Step 2 is a lifetime practice. You learn by doing. You can start today!

Step 3: Discover and Pursue Your Life Mission(s)

Listening to the Universe or to God entails continuous learning through practice, similar to what the early Christians practiced. You discover your way as you go. Indigenous Filipino spiritual groups call this practice “*Pagbabasa ng Buhay na Aklat*” (or reading the Living Book). “*Buhay na Aklat*” is your own life, truly a living scripture that God writes every day that is specifically for you.

If you practice Step 2 constantly, the result is that you discover your next life mission(s)—big or small. Discovering them is Step 3. Experience the excitement every time you discern various cues that corroborate each other. Ask questions along the way, then watch and wait for the answer.

After my September 1987 miraculous healing, I received a significant phone call that started a 10-year period serving then Defense Secretary and later President Fidel V. Ramos. It was an unmistakable cue. I knew it was my next big life mission.

I write most of my FB posts based on cues I received very early in the morning, or triggered by a YouTube video I saw that “hit me very strongly” or ideas that suddenly “pop in my head” when my mind is relaxed. “Life mission” does not have to be something big. It can be a small task triggered by an email you receive, a task that your heart knows “rings true.”

A group of my friends shared their own stories of how they discovered their innate life missions in [*Follow Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission*](#), another free e-book that you may download from the CCLFI website. You can pick up several useful practices from this gem of a book.

Step 4: Know Your Ikigai

Pursuing your life mission can be an enjoyable, fulfilling, and even profitable thing. Have you heard of the Okinawan practice of *Ikigai*?

Okinawa is a place in southern Japan where many people live beyond 100 years. These Okinawans are happy and still productive in their 80s and 90s. One of their secrets is the practice of Ikigai. It means one's life purpose.

To discover your Ikigai, make four lists in answer to the following questions:

1. What things can you do very well?
2. What do you love doing?
3. What can you do that you can be paid for?
4. What do you do or have done that the world needs?

Which item(s) is (are) common to all your four lists? THAT IS YOUR IKIGAI!

Go ahead and get a piece of paper and pen. This is a simple activity that may change your life!

Step 5: Love 101

For centuries, Ikigai worked for Okinawans because it is rooted in love, starting with self-love (what you love to do and what you do that can be paid for) and love of others (what you do that the world needs).

Distinguish between self-love and egotism, self-centeredness, or narcissism. Self-love is the acceptance of who and where you are now. Self-love is honest acknowledgement and forgiveness of your own mistakes. Taking care of your body (see Chapter 2 on How to Strengthen Your Immune System) and emotions (see Chapter 3 on How to Managing Fear) is healthy self-love. Self-love is healthy because it is rooted in the belief that you and your situation are precisely where you need to be to learn and to grow (see Chapter 4 on Self-Transformation)—a belief rooted in trust in the Universe or in God. It is trying to be the best that you can be, not what others say you should be.

Step 6: Love 102

Self-love is about watching, accepting, understanding, and managing one's ego-mind. Self-love is only a preparation. Through daily or constant practice, you will soon realize that the steps in Chapters 2 to 4 are best done from a higher perspective of souls/spirits where true love resides. Step 6 is learning how to shift our perspective of who we really are. Read Chapter 5 on Remembering Who We Are for simple, doable, and very important practices in this crucial shift.

A good way to have a better look at your own self—interests, patterns of thinking, and programming—is by practicing how to truly listen to others (see Chapter 6 on How to Better Listen to Others). Connecting with your life partner— a boyfriend or girlfriend, a spouse or a significant other—is an excellent opportunity to know yourself more while you listen to another. Successful relationships are the result of an inner work of knowing yourself while listening to your other half. It does not mean perfect or constant harmony; conflicts in relationships are necessary for comprehending Love 102.

The shift may not happen quickly. You will notice by observing your intentions and actions that you flip back and forth between your lower self and your Higher Self. That is well and good. Watching these flips is part of learning how to shift. Philosopher Ken Wilber calls the Higher Self or our soul/spirit as the “Watcher.”

Step 7: Love 103 or Help Bring About the New Earth

The last step comes naturally after you learn Step 6. When you know how to relate better to another human being, then you are ready to work effectively with them. The last step is to help and collaborate with others to bring about a better world—the New Earth. Again, we are moved by love, an ever widening circle of love—love of our friends and families, love of others, and love of our Planet Gaia (see Chapter 7 on Social Transformation).

What now? Let us be concrete, specific, and action-oriented.

Join our FB group in crafting a unique business proposal to pilot the innovative “4P Model” for Nueva Ecija farmers. 4P means “People, Planet, Profit, and Psyche.”

- The Psyche component explicitly adds SPIRITUALITY to the popular sustainable development model or 3P.
- The proposal seeks socially responsible investors who will EMPOWER farmers to become co-owners of the enterprise.
- For INCLUSIVITY, consumers and suppliers will be invited to participate in owning stocks.
- The planning and implementation are CO-CREATIVE processes of listening to (refer to my FB series on Listening Better to Others) and collaborating with each other (refer to my FB series on Social Transformation).

Join our FB group on "New Economy Explorations" and be part of the co-creative 4P subgroup. Join us in 2021! Help make the new year happier and more prosperous for everybody!

Stay safe, healthy, and cheerful!

Chapter 1 – HOW TO BETTER LISTEN TO GOD

In September 1987 I experienced a miraculous healing from three life-threatening illnesses.

That experience was the start of a “life extension” and a journey for me seeking ways to discern or listen to God so that I will know my next life mission. In this chapter, I will share with you the lessons and experiences I gained since 1987.

Those experiences can be summarized into practices. This chapter briefly describes each practice.

Practice 1.1 Positive quiet moments

Practice 1.2 Two-way prayer

Practice 1.3 Rhema and communal discernment

Practice 1.4 Reading the Living Book

Practice 1.5 Pursuing your next life mission

A Solid Foundation Banished my Fear of Death

On September 1987 in Singapore, after years of a life-threatening mix of illnesses (bigeminal arrhythmia, dyspnea, allergic rhinitis, and asthma), I finally made a decision of total surrender. "Lord, You can take me but if You want me to do something, I can stay. It is not my will; Your will be done."

Early the following morning I had a vivid dream. Jesus Christ gave me a symbolic valentine! (read the details in Chapter 1 of [Healing our Divided Planet: Stories of Transboundary Learning for our Grandchildren](#)). Since that day all my illnesses disappeared. I was miraculously healed!

This life-changing event resulted in many wonderful things for me:

- It pushed me to learn my own ways of directly discerning His Will in my daily life (micro) and my life planning (macro). I do not go to church but I have a direct daily relationship with Jesus Christ and my guardian angels. This is a long story I wish I had the time and space to tell you all.
- I have been living a "life extension" these past 34 years.
- I have been performing a series of life missions. The first one started in January 1988 when I started serving then Defense Chief Gen. Fidel V. Ramos. When I am done with my final life mission, I know it will be time for me to go.
- I am ready to go any time. "When" is not my concern anymore. I am not afraid of death—but to be honest, I am afraid of a painful death.

Allow me to share with you a similar story, [The Promise](#) (click on the link), written by Socorro Rodriguez.

1.1 Positive Quiet Moments

Our mind is often restless and noisy. Like a radio, there may just be too much static. Unless you are practicing meditation or yoga regularly, you need to develop your own way of quieting your mind. A simple and practical way that I use is going to what I call my "positive quiet moments."

Here is a list of my positive quiet moments:

- drinking my morning coffee or mocha,
- stepping out and watching flowers, trees, and the sky,
- preparing green C2 drink with ice for my grandson who is absorbed in his computer game,
- watching and listening to the music of Andre Rieu on YouTube,
- taking a short walk around the village without my cellphone,
- watching butterflies and moths attracted to flowers, and
- Re-reading what my grandson wrote in the whiteboard four years ago: "Love you Lolo Pin" (which I immortalized by including it in my e-book *Healing our Divided Planet: Stories of Transboundary Learning for our Grandchildren*).

What are in your list? Practice one or two quiet moments every day. Watch how you are able to quiet your mind whenever you want.

1.2 Two-Way Prayer

Imagine someone you know calls you. He starts to praise you then asks you for this or that, and before you can answer he hangs up. How would you describe that behavior? Disrespectful? Bastos (rude)?

That is exactly what we often do when we pray!

When I was serving as a government official under President Fidel V. Ramos, one of my assignments was to convene an interfaith group to formulate, develop, and pilot test an interfaith course called "*Pamathalaan*" for government officials. President Ramos defined it as "*pamamahala kasama ni Bathala*" or "governance with God."

That assignment was an exciting story in itself, with many seeming “coincidences” happening one after another that helped me along the way. One such coincidence is meeting and interacting online with Pastor Ben Swett, an American minister who taught me the Two-way Prayer. Pastor Ben recommends seven steps.

1. Stop for a moment
2. Open your heart and mind
3. Elevate your spirit
4. Care for another
5. Inquire of the Lord
6. Hear the Word
7. Test what you received

Step 1 is quieting your usually noisy mind. Only a still and tranquil lake can reflect the beautiful landscape and sky above. Step 6 is the discernment step. For beginners, this step may yield hazy or no result, or it may be clouded by so much noise and interference from the mind. Step 4 is important because if you are asking a question not for yourself but for the benefit of somebody you love or care for, then your ego and beliefs are less likely to interfere in Step 6. Constant practice is necessary. If you get a hazy or doubtful result, Step 7 is where you act on the answer or look for other cues that may support the answer. If the outcome is good then the answer you get from Step 6 must be genuine. Another way to minimize individual ego noise and mental interference in Step 6 is to perform the prayer as a group. This is Practice 1.3 on Communal Discernment.

Two-way prayer became part of the Pamathalaan Course. It was a practice of discernment and LISTENING. God talks to each one of us all the time but we do not know how to listen!

Try practicing it. Join other people who have practiced it. If you do, you are in good company. Abraham—the ancestor of Jews, Christians and Muslims—practiced it (because the Torah, Bible and Koran did not exist yet in his time to guide him). The early Christians practiced it (before the Bible was agreed upon in conclaves, and well before churches, priesthoods, and denominations were set up).

The novena that many Catholics in the Philippines practice is a form of two-prayer where one waits for the answer to a question or the resolution of an issue after the ninth day or the ninth week of prayer (“novena” comes from the Latin “novem” which is the number 9).

Do practice the Two-way Prayer often. We have been constantly complaining that “We don't have time.” In a pandemic-triggered lockdown, we are given much time.

1.3 Rhema and Communal Discernment

Personal practice of discernment/listening is essential. Learning how to quiet our mind and reduce internal "noise" is also necessary: ego and self-interest, assumptions and beliefs picked up from parents and teachers, the need to be right or correct, inability to admit mistake, etc.

A way to reduce or cancel out "noise" is communal discernment. Here are sample steps to practice communal discernment for solving a life problem:

1. Gather a group of relatives or friends who are practicing discernment.
2. One member of the group who is experiencing a life problem or crisis volunteers to be the "receiver" but she or he does not reveal her or his problem.
3. The group enters a quiet period where each member practices Two-Way Prayer (see Practice 3.2) to ask and discern the solution to her or his problem. Ben Swett's seven steps are recommended here to discern the answer.
4. Group members each share and tell the "receiver" the solution or advice to her or his problem. You will be surprised how identical or similar the solutions are!
5. The designated "receiver" gives her or his reaction and thanks the group without revealing what the problem is.

Early Christians practiced communal discernment. Their source of authority is the Holy Spirit—not any church, sect, bible, priest or doctrine which were not present yet. They called the inspiration or discernment one receives as “rhema”, a Greek word that means “HEARD Word of God.” Communal discernment is combining or synthesizing rhema individually received by each member. When rhema is written down they call the document “logos”, a Greek word that means “WRITTEN Word of God.” Rhema is first-hand knowledge from EXPERIENCE while logos is second-hand knowledge from reading. Unfortunately, when the Bible was later agreed upon and translated to Latin and then to English, the important distinction between rhema and logos was lost.

Why pass through a telephone operator or rely on a telegram when you can use IDD (international direct dial)? Go back to rhema. It is your HDD (heavenly direct dial) to the Holy Spirit.

An Experience with God

As I write this on April 16, 2020—the day after the Midwives of the New Earth website was launched—my sister in Canada texted me about a vivid dream where she gave birth to a baby (she is in her late 60s now) assisted by our late mother and father. She was very happy in her dream and wondered what it meant. I texted back: “A very positive sign. Something about a great achievement you completed.”

Then she texted about an experience she had. With her permission, I reproduce below our text exchange. “Ate” is the Filipino way to address an older sister.

I had a good "sharing" with Ate this morning. Woke up with the sunlight directly hitting face. Opened the blinds and the warm, bright light hit my face. There was an instant connection to something that is constant. The sun shining every single morning. I reflected on it. Closed my eyes. Quiet my mind. Few seconds of nothing yet something came up. Sun, nature, beautiful natural things remind us of the magnificence of the Being. Bright. Consistent. Beautiful beyond words. The things we feel with our physical senses ... taste of chocolate & ice cream, the sound of nice music, the beautiful sight of cities in Europe & the Rockies, the hug of children, the smell of home cooked meals.. all good... give us so much satisfaction ... contrasts that with the joy you feel inside, something intangible, something so real yet you cannot touch.. moments when your heart just explode in gratefulness & joy ... one instant I can remember was seeing Miles for the first time, there was so much joy in my heart, it was magic.. can't find the right words to describe it.... I try to connect the happiness i feel through our physical senses vs joy I feel in my heart when I am really happy. They are in different levels. I see God in those joys in my heart. This makes me less afraid. Makes me not afraid to venture what's beyond... knowing and believing that there is this constant Being I can hold on to beyond anything we can now imagine.



11:37 PM

Most people know God only as a concept or what they read and hear about. You have EXPERIENCED God. Experience converts faith to faith+knowledge.

After we transition to the other side, multiply that experience a thousandfold.



Chapter 1 - How to Better Listen to God



So why am I excited to die now! 😊

Because you KNOW God from experience, you need less of images, churches, doctrines and other "aids".



Now you can see how silly it is for people to be afraid of death.



Sounds so weird but as soon as I read your last comment, I felt so much JOY!!
Unbelievable joy!

1.4 Reading the Living Book

One of the fortunate “coincidences” when I was tasked to lead a group formulate and develop the interfaith Pamathalaan Course was meeting an indigenous Filipino religious group called Guardias de Honor Hijas de Maria. They taught me their centuries old practice of “*pagbabasa ng Buhay na Aklat*” (reading the Living Book).

According to them, and that is also my belief and practice since my 1987 miraculous healing, God talks to each one of us. God is writing another scripture—a LIVING scripture or book—which is the string of micro and macro events in YOUR life, and in each of our lives. In the same way that we read and try to understand the Scripture, we must also try to read and understand the many cues in one's own daily life. The practice of “reading the Living Book” consists of listening, discerning, and “connecting the dots” in one's daily life, which is YOUR living book. It is a more personal, intimate, and beautiful way of listening to God.

Here are some guide questions for those who wish to start this practice in interpreting the MICRO events and factors in one's daily life:

- Something you just read or heard particularly “struck” you. Why?
- What lesson is a “bad” (your own judgment) situation or problem trying to teach you?
- A friend proposes an idea, the same idea you have been thinking during the past few days. Check your intuitive discernment about this coincidence. Is it time to implement the idea?

Here are some guide questions for those who want to listen and understand what God is trying to tell you through the MACRO events and factors in one's life:

- What are your innate passions? Make a list.
- What are your innate talents? Make a list.
- What are the most fulfilling, joyful, or happiest moments in your life? Make a list of these "peak life experiences."
- Connect these dots—what are they trying to tell you?

Explore, learn, and fine-tune your listening skills as you go through your daily practice of reading your own Living Book.

You will continue to finetune the above skill in Practice 1.5.

1.5 Pursuing your Next Life Mission

From my own experiences during the last three decades, I realized that whenever I pursue a life mission, many supportive friends, the right information, and other seeming "coincidences" come to fore. My sister posted a comment to my FB post announcing the Midwives of the New Earth website.

When you "listen" to that still, small voice and when you are willing to be a "worker in the vineyard", beautiful things happen.

Discovering your next life mission is a form of listening to God.

Now, let us drill down on the last three questions from Practice 1.4:

- What are your innate passions? Make a list. Your passions can become clearer to you if you ask yourself the following:
 - On what topic can you make a very convincing, motivating or inspiring speech?
 - When you read or listen to the news, what events, actions, or issues anger you the most?
 - What is your dream project? If you had all the time, money, and support to pursue that project, what will it be?
 - Imagine you are in a hospital bed, dying, and reviewing your life—what have you done that made you happy and what do you still wish to do before you go?
- What are your innate talents? Make a list.
 - What are you good at?
 - What do friends and colleagues often ask you for help with?
 - If you had won in a contest, what skills would have helped you win?
 - Recall a project or activity that many people congratulated you for having done excellent work. What were your expertise, aptitudes, or talents useful in doing that project or activity?
- What are your peak life experiences, when you felt most fulfilled, joyful, or happiest? Make a list and study it. Practice reading your Living Book. What do you discern?

This is one of the key questions in the practices or exercises described in the e-book [“Follow Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission.”](#)

When you found and when you are performing your next life mission, "beautiful things happen" indeed. Here are actual examples of beautiful "coincidences" that helped me pursue a life mission in 1996–97. The interfaith group (consisting of Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and indigenous Filipino religious groups) which formulated and developed the Pamathalaan Course—we called ourselves Mamamathala—experienced an exciting series of supportive cues, connections, and coincidences.

- We learned about Ignatian spirituality from Fr. Thomas Green in Ateneo. He wrote many books including *Experiencing God: the Three Stages of Prayer*. He said that discernment and action are like dancing, not an unquestioning obedience but a two-way interaction or a "dance" between rhema from the Holy Spirit (Jesuits practice communal discernment) and our personal decisions.
- President Fidel V. Ramos gave us his go-signal on February 13, 1996
- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung gave us a grant that enabled us to put together a conference and a book on *God-centered Economics*.
- We briefed and received inputs from DECS (now DepEd), National Union of Christian Democrats, SEARSOLIN (Cagayan de Oro), PhilDHRRA network, Career Executive Service Board, Institute of Islamic Studies, and Moral Recovery Program.
- The Pamathalaan Course was officially launched at DECS on April 29, 1996.
- In July 1997—after two pilot runs of the course—I attended the annual conference of the World Future Society in San Francisco, California. I was browsing in a bookstore, picked up a book, and read the following on its back cover:

“Listen.

“The words to the next song you hear. The information in the next article you read. The storyline of the next movie you watch. The chance utterance of the next person you meet. Or the whisper of the next river, the next ocean, the next breeze that caresses your ear—all these devices are Mine; all these avenues are open to Me. I will speak to you if you will listen. I will come to you if you will invite Me. I will show you then that I have always been there.

“All ways.”

The words struck me like a thunderbolt! It was another strong confirmation in the two-way “dance” that Mamamathala—as a community of discerners—had the rare fortune to experience. That book was the first volume of a series on *Conversations with God* by Neale Donald Walsch.

Chapter 2 – HOW TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

The pandemic reminds us the importance of protecting everyone: yourself and your loved ones, the people around you, and the public. It underlines the importance of good health and the services of health professionals who help us maintain or restore our good health. Everyone is aware and talking about strengthening our immune system.

Before the pandemic, concerns about maintaining health was common mainly among senior people like me. But I have been practicing strengthening my immune system long before.

In this book I do not preach. I prefer to tell you about the practices that worked for me. Here are some of these practices that may work for you too.

2.1 Immune System Booster Drink



There are natural foods that boost one's immune system. Healthline offers a few options including citrus fruits, bell pepper, broccoli, garlic, ginger, spinach, yogurt, almonds, sunflower seeds, turmeric, green tea, papaya, kiwi, poultry, and shellfish. My own formula consists of boiled slices of ginger (ginger tea or "salabat" in Pilipino) plus pineapple juice plus freshly squeezed orange plus ice. Sometimes I add a few drops of honey.

2.2 Morning Exercise



After a good and restful sleep, my morning routine includes watering the plants around the house. I get sunshine, some exercise, and good vibes from appreciating my plants. What does this combination provide us?

- It is well known that sleep is an essential factor to boost your immune system.
- Your skin produces Vitamin D when exposed to sunlight.
- Exercise produces good muscle tone, cleans skin pores as you sweat, and generates positive or “feel good” hormones such as endorphins.
- According to numerous scientific researches, being around plants boosts your health and well-being. Check out “[Health and Well-being Benefits of Plants](#).”

Watering plants around our yard was one of my daily household chores when I was younger.

2.3 Be Cheerful

Twenty years ago a colleague remarked that I am a Pollyanna, an unrealistic optimist. I guess I had mellowed down. Nonetheless, I believe my sunny disposition (an astrologer said I have Sun and Venus in my First House) is one factor why I am rarely ill. Look! I am strong and healthy at 77 (flexing my tiny biceps....ha ha ha!).

Many scientific researches show that happiness boosts one's immune system. Read <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-happiness-doctor/201706/happiness-and-your-immune-system>.

We keep hearing that "laughter is the best medicine." The Scripture says "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Be happy! Watch how lovable sweethearts Eugene (a Pinoy) and Vika (a pretty Lithuanian) prank each other or be childishly playful in their [YouTube channel](#).

Do something silly and funny that makes you and others laugh! I often watch "Just for Laughs Gags" on YouTube during long flights and I cannot hold myself from laughing!

As I end many of my emails these days (and I do mean it): Stay safe, healthy and cheerful!

2.4 Love and Be Loved

"Thanks Prof. Apin for this initiative. I appreciate you so much!"

"Thank you for making this happen, Sir!"

Many other thanks were expressed by my students after the online public presentation event that I set up and implemented one morning. In our subsequent Zoom faculty meeting at the UP Technology Management Center, I introduced myself as the oldest teacher in the group who continued to teach after my retirement because I love teaching, I love my students, and I enjoy knowing that they learn and appreciate what I do for them.

"Love you Lolo Pin" and "Best lolo ever" wrote my grandson on my whiteboard a few years ago. I even immortalized a photo of this message in my e-book on *Healing our Divided Planet*.

"Luv you Tay...you're my ROCK" wrote my daughter on the same white board two years ago. "Tay" is short for Filipino word "tatay" or father. I could not get myself to erase their messages from the whiteboard all these years.

I enjoy our regular video chat with my family and the families of my two sisters in Canada and a sister in Los Angeles. Despite the distance (but thanks to the pandemic), the love and affection grew even more between us.

It brings me joy to love and be loved; to be a cheerer-encourager to someone, and for someone to be my cheerer-encourager. Happiness and a feeling of well-being are always in the background when you are surrounded by people who appreciate and love you.

Love and health are connected, so says science in [The Surprising Health Benefits of Love](#), but experiencing it is way. Chapter 6 on how to better listen to others may help you in this direction.

2.5 The ultimate immune system booster

The Lord's Prayer is God the Son's prayer—with us—to God the Father. Yeshua (or Jesus) authored it Himself.

Notice it begins with the first person plural pronoun, **Our** Father. When you are praying it, you are praying TOGETHER WITH the millions and billions who had prayed it in the past and who are now praying it with you at that moment. And Yeshua is praying WITH YOU! Powerful!

Notice that the first part of the prayer is for the coming of the New Earth: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Is this pandemic leading to a "global reset" toward the New Earth? This is my primary reason behind setting up the website to help and to connect midwives of the New Earth. IT WILL come because billions have been praying for it! And because Yeshua HIMSELF is praying it!

Finally, the last part is a blanket prayer against everything our imaginations tend to be fearful of: "...Deliver us from evil." Whether it is manmade, biological, political, financial, or military machinations of dark forces, dispel your fears and worries. The Lord's Prayer is the most powerful and overall shield, protection, immune system booster.

Listen to the [Lord's Prayer](#) sung in Yeshua's original Aramaic language. My nieces cried when they first heard it. If you like to learn practical skills along this direction, re-read Chapter 1 on how to better listen to God.

Chapter 3 – HOW TO MANAGE FEAR

There are many ways to manage fear depending on your personality and situation. If you are more of the “thinking type” and you think many things are within your control, try Practices 3.1 and 3.3, but if you are more of the “feeling type” then try Practices 3.2 and 3.4. If you think you cannot solve it alone or would rather depend on somebody else, try Practices 3.2 and 3.5. If you think you have tried everything and you feel like you are at “at the end of the rope” try Practice 3.6.

In a nutshell, these are the practices to manage fear:

Practice 3.1 Dis-identify from the fear

Practice 3.2 Prayer

Practice 3.3 Manage your risks

Practice 3.4 Gratefulness

Practice 3.5 Find support

Practice 3.6 Let go

3.1 Dis-Identify from the Fear

Look at thoughts and emotions as merely passers-by. They come and go. Some may stay with you for quite a long time but they are not part of you. Certainly YOU are not those thoughts and emotions.

Step 1. The first step is to be ever mindful so that the moment when a thought or emotion arrives—triggered by whatever—you are aware of its presence. It will require moment-to-moment effort and heightened attention to watch the thoughts passing through your mind. Psychologists call this the skill of metacognition. I simply call it self-observation.

Step 2. Once you notice a thought arrives, just watch it. Watching a thought or an emotion is a way to avoid being “carried away” by it. The opposite—when one is carried away by a strong emotion—is an indication of lack of awareness. If you notice being stressed while driving through a heavy traffic, say to yourself: “There is stress passing through me.” You are objectifying or distancing yourself from the stress. If you are worried or afraid, and you notice it so, then watch the worry or fear. You are neither fighting nor denying it, you are just watching it.

The other night while waiting for sleep, my idle mind was asking itself questions such as “what if groceries get scarce?” I noticed that worry and fear were starting to creep in. I started to watch and I could clearly see how my mind was imagining future scenarios and then getting scared of them. After a while, the worry and fear died down, and I slid to sleep.

Step 3. Often, the mere act of watching a fear, worry, anger, or any emotion—and thereby distancing yourself from it—leads to the emotion simply fading away. At other times if the emotion persists, the third step is to make a conscious decision to do something, such as (a) remove, go away from, or manage whatever triggered the emotion (see Practice 3.3), or (b) replace the emotion or thought with something else such as prayer (see Practice 3.2) or gratitude (see Practice 3.4).

According to experts, the ability to be aware of our emotions (Step 1) at the moment they appear, is the first skill in emotional intelligence. The ability to manage our emotions (Step 3) is the second skill. How can you manage something if you are not even aware of it? Else, you are “carried away” by your emotions such as fear or anger; fear controls you and you react automatically or by habit. Automatic reaction is a sign that one is unaware and not in control.

People who are aware can be angry, but for them anger is a conscious and considered choice and not an automatic reaction to something or somebody. Listen to Aristotle:

“Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy.”

3.2 Prayer

A prayer is a call to and for God to take over, and there are modes of praying that can help you manage your fear.

Step 1. If you are a prayerful person, I bet you have done this often in the past to counter your fears. Prayer is not just a way to replace fear with other thoughts and emotions, prayer is a way to connect to the Power—our common Source, God—that is the fountain of peace, total acceptance, and love. It is the most solid foundation for dissolving fear if faith in God or concept of God is made more solid by experience of God (see Chapter 1).

Step 2. If you are the type who prefers quiet meditation instead of a set or prescribed prayer, then do so. If this practice works for you, then well and good. Meditation is a way to quiet the mind and the emotions. If you meditate as a regular practice or habit, then the act of meditation can quickly put you in a state of peace and stillness. The fear will then just fade away.

Step 3. If you are a doctor, a scientist, or any thinking person, perhaps you are aware that there are scientific studies showing significant correlation between trees and human health. Communing with nature (or with Gaia) is a form of prayer. Spending quiet time in a park or garden surrounded by trees and plants with flowers or with a quiet pond is also a form of connecting within to the same Source (see Practice 3.1). In Jan Johnsen's book *Heaven is a Garden*, the author wrote about looking for a power spot in the garden where healing energy exists. Find yours in your own garden.

3.3 Manage Your Risks

The professional risk manager does not waste her energies worrying or fretting or fearing; she analyzes the situation and takes appropriate action. These are the essential steps of what she does.

Step 1: Identify. Make a list of all risks you or your loved ones are facing.

Step 2: Assess and rank. For each risk, (a) determine from past experiences or statistics the likelihood or probability it will happen in a time period, say year 2021; (b) assess the total cost if it will happen, both in terms of tangible (e.g. money) and intangible measures (e.g. lives); and (c) classify each risk whether it is within your control or outside your control.

As of 31 December 2020, total death toll from coronavirus in the Philippines is 9,244 (John Hopkins University). Compare this with mortality in 2010 due to pneumonia which is 45,591 and 22,877 for chronic lower respiratory diseases (DOH). These numbers show the disproportionate attention and fear everyone including the government is paying the pandemic.

Multiplying the total cost by the probability gives an estimate of likely impact. Statisticians call this the Bayesian Principle. The risks can then be arranged from highest to lowest according to this estimated impact figure.

Step 3a: Address risks within your control. Of course, one reason much fewer people are afraid of ordinary flu is because vaccines have been developed and sold yearly against the latest strains or varieties of the virus. This brings us to Step 3a.

For every risk you are in control of, you either (a) prevent or at least reduce the probability of happening (social distancing, community quarantine, face mask, frequent washing of hands, don't touch your eyes or nose or mouth with unwashed hands, etc.) and (b) take preparatory steps so that if a risk materializes, its cost to you will be least. An example of preparatory step is to find out in advance who to call or where to immediately bring a loved one if he or she shows symptoms.

Step 3b—Address risks outside your control. For risks outside one's control, the risk manager will (a) sharpen his skills in monitoring and anticipation and (b) plan in advance what are the mitigating actions to take if a risk materializes.

These actions by the professional risk manager are rational steps where emotions such as fear, worry, or panic have no place. Having done her best analysis and made her corresponding action or recommendation for action, she puts her attention and energies to other matters requiring her attention.

3.4 Gratitude List

When you feel grateful, you are in a happy state of being full or enough, completed or receiving, and loved or attended to. This shifts your internal states to more or very positive ones. If you practice gratefulness every day, your positive state of mind makes it less likely for fear to enter or stay too long. If you are fretting or worried or depressed over a problem, shift away from this negative state by saying: "This problem is teaching me a lesson. Thank you for this lesson whatever it is." Then you can change your thoughts from worry to analysis of what lesson or opportunity the problem is offering or opening for you.

One of my daily habits is to look for anyone or anything that I am thankful for, be it big or small. I have been asking myself, what shall I thank for this ongoing pandemic? My six answers:

1. Thank you for the giant flashlight that is exposing many dark things and actions that their doers would rather remain hidden and unknown.
2. Thank you for the giant balance that is showing how our technological knowledge had far outweighed and outstripped our ethical knowledge.
3. Thank you for the giant mirror that is showing us the worst and best parts of ourselves.
4. Thank you for the opportunity to see more clearly how interconnected we all are in this planet.
5. Thank you for learning new health habits that protect both myself and others around me.
6. Thank you for the pause that allows me to attend to important things.

Make your own gratitude list by asking yourself “what am I grateful for in my life, past or present, big or small?” Make it a daily habit to watch for things you can be grateful for so that you fill your day with a positive note.

3.5 Find Support

We have friends and loved ones who are stronger than us in times of crisis and who are willing to give us support. This support may be in any form depending on your friend and your relationship; it may be in the form of advice, a second opinion or an alternative viewpoint, or simply a sympathetic ear.

Notice that managing fear can either mean getting solutions from outside or from other people, or getting solution from within you. If you have tried both or if you are "out on a limb" then muster the courage, readiness to be vulnerable, and humility to approach a loved one and ask for support.

External support can also come from various other sources. You can seek help from professional counselors some of whom are providing their services for free this pandemic period. You can read a book on a topic that you feel may help you. Some watch their favorite religious TV channels. My niece was crying of happiness and comfort when she first heard the YouTube chant of the Lord's Prayer in original Aramaic language. Many Filipino drivers have the habit of making the Sign of the Cross whenever they pass in front of a church; they believe it will help to keep them safe from accidents.

You can try contacting your guardian angel; he or she has been assigned to help, guide, and protect you since birth. All your guardian angel is waiting for is an earnest request from your part. If you know from experience that you are constantly guarded and guided by your guardian angel, you will fear less.

Try doing this. Think of any question you need an answer to or an issue that is bothering you now. Before you sleep tonight, mentally ask that question to your guardian angel. When you wake up (or shortly before you wake up) the next morning did any idea pop in your head? Did you have a dream? "Pop ins" usually enter your head during the time between sleeping and waking—a time when your conscious mind is quiet and cannot yet do its usual tricks of judging, elaborating, interpreting, embellishing, denying, etc.

If this does not work, try again the following night. Our guardian angel is always around to help us, but he or she cannot interfere with our free will and force ideas into our heads. Our asking opens or allows our guardian angel to give us guidance. I have years of experiences doing this and I have many wonderful stories that I can share in another time. If you know from experience that you are not alone and that you are surrounded by many invisible helpers, you will fear less.

We are not alone; there is A HOST of invisible helpers, guides, guardians, and angels around us and they protect us.

3.6 Let Go

Twice in my life, my own death was a clear and imminent possibility. During those episodes, I asked myself hard questions I never asked on normal times. We are now living through an abnormal episode and I think many are asking themselves some hard questions.

- What if you are hit by Miss Corona, and death is a clear and imminent possibility, will you remain gripped by terror and fear? Or will you be ready and willing to LET GO?
- What if a dear one is hit by Miss Corona, and death is a clear and imminent possibility, are you ready and willing to LET GO of her or him?
- We are very much dependent now on the Internet. What if this global network will collapse tomorrow, can you LET GO?

Letting go is an antidote to fear. While “what if” questions are invented by the mind and driven by fear, letting go is a decision of the heart driven by love and trust. Let me give an example from my own experience.

My son Magiting and his sweetheart Laarni were engaged in 1998. Weeks before they were married that May, I sent Agi (our nickname for Magiting) a short email: “You need to listen to your mother and me less and less, and you need to listen to Laarni more and more.” After I pressed “Send” I felt different, but I didn't know why.

It took my mind a couple of days to know why: I was letting him go. The heart knew and the mind was the last to know.

Are you now afraid or worried of losing someone or something? Trust in the goodness of the Universe; trust in God; LET GO. Try it now.

Try this practice. Go to your attic or storage area. Review the old items there and make a decision. Which will you throw away? Which will you give or donate? These are "baby steps" towards learning how to let go.

Letting go is easier for those with solid spiritual foundations. Chapter 1 on How to Better Listen to God will help you strengthen your spiritual foundation, but Chapter 6 on How to Better Listen to Others is a good preparation for learning how to better listen to God.

Chapter 4 – SELF-TRANSFORMATION

This pandemic is changing our routines. It is altering relationships and activities that we used to take for granted; we are being challenged. Spending more time at home is magnifying how we relate to our family members—either for better or for worse. This “new normal” applies not only to the outside world but also to ourselves and our lives.

The pandemic has given us more time to self-reflect. Consider these questions: Are you allowing the situation to passively change you? Are you resisting, complaining, fretting, decrying, or spending your emotional energies in useless and fruitless ways? Are you consciously and deliberately planning and choosing what and how to change yourself? Are you “playing the victim” of externally imposed change? Or will you “ride the pandemic tiger” and be the master of your own change?

If you answer YES to these questions, then welcome to these practical exercises toward being in charge of your own change. Start being a MASTER OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION by learning the following practices.

Practice 4.1 Self-observation

Practice 4.2 Doorway to higher emotional intelligence

Practice 4.3 Anger should be a choice

Practice 4.4 Esbert versus Isko

Practice 4.5 Transforming reality

Practice 4.6 Control of attention

Practice 4.7 A caveat

Practice 4.8 Following Your creative pathway

4.1 Self-observation

Before you can change something you need to first be aware of it, observe and study it, and understand it. That includes changing yourself.

Do you assume that you fully know and understand yourself? Hold it. Don't say "yes" immediately. Do you consciously observe and study yourself as a matter of habitual practice? Most people would answer this question with a "no."

Start OBSERVING YOURSELF: your actions, your thoughts, your feelings, your emotions, and your intentions. Try to observe yourself from moment to moment.

In Japan, a good emperor is symbolized by having three sacred treasures: (1) the sword representing power, (2) the jewel representing wealth, and most importantly, (3) the mirror representing self-observation and self-knowledge.

4.2 Doorway to Higher Emotional Intelligence

Many studies around the world are showing that EQ or emotional quotient is more powerful than IQ or intelligence quotient as a predictor of success in life and in work. Will you hire a summa cum laude who is known to continuously challenge his boss and to be a bad team player?

Emotional intelligence consists of five domains:

1. awareness of one's emotions
2. ability to manage one's emotions
3. ability to sense emotions in others (empathy)
4. ability to manage relationships
5. motivating oneself

A good reference is *Emotional Intelligence: Key Readings on the Mayer and Salovey Model* (2004) by John D. Mayer, Marc A. Brackett, and Peter Salovey.

Awareness of your own emotions is the first domain and the DOORWAY to emotional intelligence. Consider these: When was the last time you were angry? Was it a quick automatic reaction to a trigger? If you respond positively, then you are unaware. You forgot your mirror (see Practice 4.1). To manage anger you must first be aware when it is approaching. Awareness when it is just coming in awards you with the POWER OF CHOICE to be angry or not. That is in the second domain of emotional intelligence.

Remember what Aristotle said?

“Anybody can become angry—that is easy but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

Practice watching your emotions and know when they are coming in at the moment that they are coming in.

4.3 Anger Should Be a Choice

Let me tell you a funny story I heard many years ago from the President of the Theosophical Society of the Philippines.

Once there was a tiger who ravaged livestock and properties in a village. Village people were both angry and scared. After several attempts didn't work, they decided to ask help from a wise holy guru who lived in a cave in the forest.

"Beloved guru, please help us," implored the villagers.

"Yes I will help you. You may return home in peace," said the guru.

The guru searched for the tiger and convinced him to be kinder to the villages and to stop harming them and their animals. The tiger promised to obey.

After several days, the tiger—all bruised, limping and in great pain—returned to the guru.

"Guru, I followed your advice and look what the villagers did to me. They beat me up and almost killed me!"

The guru answered: "You must roar once in a while."

Going back to Practice 4.2, being aware leads to having the power to choose whether to be angry or not. Anger is a choice to an aware person; it is an automatic reaction to an unaware person. We have other choices actually; you may choose to really feel angry or you may just DISPLAY or SHOW anger. The moral of the story is to be aware to and to exercise choice.

4.4 Esbert versus Isko

Let me introduce you to Esbert and Isko and the key difference between their approaches.



Street Scene 1

Bystander to Esbert: "You're stupid!"

Esbert to bystander: "Your're more stupid!" Esbert punches the bystander.



Street Scene 2

Bystander to Isko: "You're stupid!"

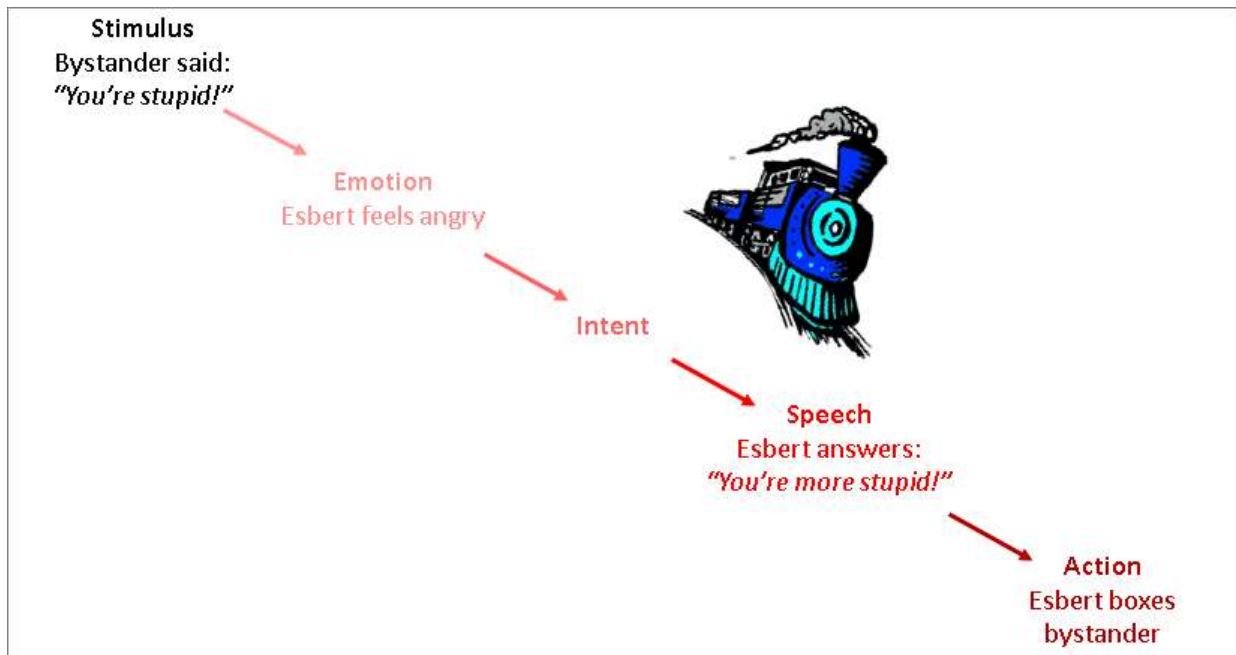
Isko to bystander: "I don't know what made you say that."

How different is Isko from Esbert?

There are no wrong answers but there is one best answer: Esbert's attention is focused externally while Isko's attention is focused INTERNALLY.

The bystander's statement triggered an automatic reaction from Esbert: He hears the statement He gets angry He makes a decision He answers back He punches the bystander.

The response is automatic because Esbert goes through the above train of events from 1 to 5 like a "runaway train" that the driver or engineer has lost control over. The bystander puts Esbert in the runaway train, and Esbert reacts automatically.



In Isko's case, he is observing himself. He probably goes through 1-2-3 but at 3 he makes a different decision and tells the bystander that he doesn't know what made the bystander say something like that. Isko is aware at the moment he is getting angry, and he makes his own conscious choice.

Awareness awards one the POWER OF CHOICE.

Right now, you are reading these words. Your attention is focused externally on the computer monitor or smartphone screen. Try now to consciously shift your attention to your "internal conversation" that often takes place when you are reading something or listening to someone. Can you do it? I admit it is difficult at first; it takes constant practice.

Mentally preparing what you will say next while a person is still talking is common. But will the words you are about to say to the person be unfair, hurtful, or rude? Think some more and avoid the path chosen by Esbert.

Here is a practical application of INTERNAL ATTENTION. When you are listening to someone, practice focusing your attention on what he or she is saying (external attention) and at the same time also focus your attention internally and watch how your mind is processing what you are hearing. Check yourself when you see your mind beginning to wander off.

This practice of simultaneous external and internal attention when listening to someone is called "200% LISTENING."

4.5 Transforming Reality

We learned that 200% listening is a practice that illustrates:

- how awareness awards one the power of choice and
- how internal attention opens the door to management of emotions (from Domain 1 to Domain 2 of emotional intelligence).

This practice illustrates a third important principle: you can exercise the power to CONTROL YOUR ATTENTION.

My undergraduate degree from UP Diliman was BS Physics. I learned that quantum theory had been proven many times through experiments. Two of its “strange” principles are:

- Physical phenomenon is described as a set of probabilities (the wave function). Indeterminacy is its innate characteristic.
- The act of observation selects one of these probabilities and makes it a reality. The act of observing something CHANGES that thing. What was indeterminate before is now definite.

In layman's terms, where you put your attention (and subsequent action) is where you create your reality. Hence, learning to control your attention or selecting where to focus it is the first step in knowing how to TRANSFORM YOUR REALITIES, both inner and outer.

This happens all the time in scientific research. Where a scientist puts his research attention (and research funds) is also where he can create new scientific knowledge. Check out this article on "Quantum Theory and Reality" from [Scientific American](#).

4.6 Control of Attention

Where you put your attention is where you create or strengthen your reality. Ironically, if you put your attention on things you dislike or detest, then you strengthen that part of YOUR reality. If you spend your time and energies (physical, emotional, or mental) harping or fretting over a government policy you disagree with, or a statement made by a foreign president you view as stupid or unfair, you are creating that part of your reality.

In this pandemic, after you have taken reasonable precautions, put your attention elsewhere that is more creative, happy, useful, or productive. Transform your realities and veer toward a direction that you consciously choose.

In our FB group, New Economy Explorations, we are focusing our attention into creating something useful for people in this pandemic. We are leading a subgroup of members systematically studying pandemic-induced problems to arrive at “small wins” or “low lying fruits” or those micro solutions within reach of most everyone. Join us!

Another subgroup is putting together the elements of a macro solution—a position paper for the Philippine government to create a new Department of Home Welfare.

In the same FB group, another subgroup is in the process of co-creating a business proposal for an innovative enterprise that features (a) empowerment of fishermen and employees, (b) protection of the environment, (c) good ROI or return of interest for investors, and (d) spirituality and values formation. In short: a PEOPLE-PLANET-PROFIT-PSYCHE enterprise model that improves on the sustainable development paradigm.

All these actions CONTROL ATTENTION in positive, affirmative and productive directions. Stop wasting your time (being scared) on the pandemic. Stop wasting your time (being angry) with policies and statements from politicians you dislike around the world. Create new realities elsewhere.

4.7 A Caveat

The path to self-transformation is strewn with blind alleys, wrong turns, and booby traps. Be careful.

When I was an undergraduate student in UP Diliman, I practiced yoga and meditation. I became a vegetarian. Soon I could see auras of people. Then I can do out-of-the-body experience (OOBE) or what others call astral travel. As my body is lying down in my dormitory bed (in the former Narra Residence Hall next to the College of Education) I can instantly move around the dormitory at will. I can transport myself to the dorm canteen just by willing it. I can instantly transport myself to Manhattan in New York City, for example. I see people but they don't see me. I know from experience that my consciousness and power of perception is independent of my body.

Then I discovered that if a strong emotion such as fear enters in me, I am violently thrown back to my body lying in bed, often in very painful and uncomfortable ways. I realized that OOBE ability could be dangerous to me if I cannot even manage my emotions. I was looking for an expert to guide me; I couldn't find anyone. My only guide then to self-transformation was a tiny book I carried in my polo shirt pocket everyday: *At the Feet of the Master* written by Jiddu Krishnamurti when he was still a little boy under the instruction of an Ascended Master.

I made a decision then to give up the practice of astral travelling. My conclusion was that psychic ability has nothing to do with spirituality or good moral values or simple self-control. However, my OOBIE episodes taught me solid knowledge from experience: that I am the consciousness/awareness and I can exist apart from my body. I realized that my body is only a temporary vehicle, that my body is not me, that I am only the driver of the vehicle.

As a vegetarian, my dormitory friends enjoy eating meals with me because they consume the meat parts of my food. However, I pity my mother having to cook twice to give me a vegetarian meal. After two years, I gave up vegetarianism. It is not practical. I still prefer veggies, fruits, and seafood over meat, and I think this preference contributed to my health as decades rolled by.

In self-transformation, it pays to be careful and discriminating.

4.8 Follow Your Creative Pathway

We asked hundreds of respondents around the world this question: What was your peak life experience when you felt greatest joy, happiness, or fulfillment? Describe it.

Answers always fall under four categories:

1. Re-creating oneself (or SELF-TRANSFORMATION), e.g. graduating in college, passing the board exam, climbing a mountain, etc.
2. Pro-creating another or helping another re-create him/herself, e.g. seeing her baby walk for the first time, marriage, counseling that averted a suicide, etc.
3. Creating something (or innovation), e.g. an invention, writing a poem or book, making and tending a garden, etc.
4. Co-creating with a group (or social innovation), e.g. award-winning community project, participating in town parade, basketball team winning a trophy, etc.

The above question is one of the five key questions in the self-help e-book [*Follow Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission*](#). The book's eight volunteer co-authors, two volunteer editors and more than 30 contributors around the globe had decided to give it away for free. Download your free copy from the CCLFI website.

Now tell me, why do you think acts of creation or transformation by us humans are often accompanied by great joy and happiness and, sometimes, exhilaration?

For this practice, schedule a time and select a place where you can quietly reflect on your life. Review your life and identify its peaks and valleys. Select a peak life experience. What were you doing then? What gave you so much joy and fulfillment? Which of the four categories does your peak life experience fall under?

Chapter 5 – REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE

People entertain a large variety of concepts about who they are. When introducing themselves to others, they start with their names and usually give out their name card or calling card. Attached to their names, many people think they are inseparable from their role in life—whether father or mother, son or daughter—or position at work. Some people with advanced academic degrees feel insulted if you miss acknowledging them as Doctor this or Engineer that.

Most people point to their bodies when referring to themselves; as if they are their bodies. Some who are perceptive can sense that what their bodies want and what their minds want could be different: there are many parts of ourselves. One part will enjoy something while another part feels guilty about it. Roles can also lead to “conflict of interest” in some situations.

When and after we die, are we still these things that we think we are and do they still matter?

During this pandemic, we are so immobilized and threatened that we are forced to reflect on what things really do matter. There are many stories about what people on their deathbeds reveal their realizations of what things matter to them more than others. Twice in my life I have faced situations that are truly life threatening—situations that forced me to reflect on what is more important versus what is less important. I am grateful for those situations because it led me to realize important insights that otherwise I would completely miss.

One important insight in September 1987 (see Chapter 1.1 of my e-book *Healing our Divided Planet*) during the second of my two life-threatening situations is that my self-concept or my ego is not of supreme importance. The real me is something more permanent than even my own life or my own body. From that new perspective, self-love is eclipsed by love of others—family, friends and colleagues—and by a dedication to pursue your life mission for the benefit of others. As a child, we learn from catechism class that we are “sons and daughters of God” but as we grow older this remains a mere concept. Worse, we forgot that we are indeed sons and daughters of God. That September 1987 experience made me remember who I really am: I am a son of God.

5.1 We Are Souls/Spirits

My e-book *Healing our Divided Planet* refers to stories told by people who were pronounced dead (no heartbeat, no respiration, etc.) but later mysteriously revived, sometimes while their bodies were already brought to the morgue. This strange medical phenomenon is now referred to as NDE or near-death experiences.

What is very interesting, says Dr. Raymond Moody who first collected and published these stories, is that there are many common elements in these individual stories. One amazing common element in these stories of NDE patients is their “getting out” of their physical bodies and looking down and watching their own bodies in hospitals or sprawled on a highway after an accident.

What do these empirical findings tell us? It suggests that our consciousness can be separate from our bodies. Our self-identity is with our consciousness or awareness, and not with our bodies. We ARE souls/spirits more than we are bodies.

Suggested practice: Download the free e-book [Healing our Divided Planet](#) and read Story 1.4. Every day or every now and then, remind yourself by saying: “I am not my body; one day I will leave it behind.” Or you can say: “I am the driver of this car; when it gets too old and unrepairable, then I will leave this car behind.”

5.2 We Are All Creators

International data shows that peak life experiences are occasions when we are engaged in acts of creation (see the chapter on Question One in the e-book [Follow Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission](#)). A peak life experience is accompanied by great joy and fulfillment.

Why? Perhaps we forgot that we are children of God. We are also creators because we are children of the Creator.

Suggested practice: Select a quiet time and place to reflect. Review your life. Identify your peak life experience. Recall what you did and what happened. It will fall under one of four types of creative acts. Learn about them from the Question One chapter.

5.3 Do We Have a Soul?

In Practice 4.7 I mentioned about my ability to perform OOBIE or out-of-body experience.

I had since stopped the practice but it taught me that the conscious awareness of myself can exist apart from my body. I know that I am NOT my body because I can get out of it. I had a rare and fortunate foretaste or glimpse of what it will feel like when I die and leave my body. I will remain a conscious, sentient, and aware being who is able to make decisions independent of my body.

So, do we have a soul? The question comes from the ego-mind who mistakenly identifies itself with the body. We ARE souls/spirits who HAVE bodies. This is not a religious belief; it is a knowledge coming from my own experience.

Suggested practice: Remind yourself everyday or every now and then by saying "I am a conscious self-aware spirit inhabiting this body."

5.4 Soul Moments

We are both body and spirit, but we are more spirit than we are bodies. We are ego-mind and soul-spirit. We perform the functions of both. Our ego-mind has evolved for our survival and protection, but we are more than that; we are soul-spirits.

Here is a list of examples of "soul moments" from my own experience. What are your soul moments? Make your own list.

- Being conscious and aware
- Loving and caring for others
- Admiring a flower, a clear blue sky or distant mountains
- Lost while listening to classical music
- Being inspired by what we see, read or watch
- Doing something in pursuit of our calling

It is a good practice to be aware of our two distinct parts by reminding ourselves the distinction between our ego-mind functions and our soul-spirit functions. Always remember the distinction when we decide and act (see table below):

EGO-MIND FUNCTIONS	SOUL-SPIRIT FUNCTIONS
Fear	Love
Protect	Nurture
Envy	Appreciate
Blame	Understand
Compete	Cooperate
Own	Share
Separate	Unity

Suggested practice: Every day and every time you decide or do something, ask yourself: WHICH FUNCTION are you using? Which is more appropriate at this moment?

5.5 Three Final Life Questions

From previous posts, we now know better: we are souls/spirits inhabiting bodies. The common but misplaced belief that we are our bodies stem from the importance many people place on tangible things over intangible things.

In 5.1 we talked about NDE experiences of people who died and who were mysteriously revived. There are surprising commonalities among the stories of their NDE experiences: (1) instantaneous review of one's life as if in a movie together with a spiritual being (Jesus or St. Peter or an angel; those who are not religious say it is a "Being of Light"); and (2) three final questions asked by the spiritual being after the life review:

1. What have you learned?
2. What have you contributed (legacies)?
3. Who have you helped or loved?

The spiritual being does not ask: How big was your house or houses? How many cars did you own? How much was your total asset or net worth? Tangible assets are NOT important in heaven or paradise! Intangible assets (learnings, legacies and loves) matter there!

Read the chapter on "Question 2: Self-Assessment along Three Final Life Questions" from [*Follow Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission*](#) (CCLFI, 2020).

5.6 Tangible vs. Intangible Assets

A misplaced identification with our physical bodies is related to the importance and attention many people place on physical, material, or tangible things. As we saw in 5.5, tangible assets are NOT important in heaven. Intangible assets like learnings, legacies and loves matter there! In the end, we are souls/spirits; we ARE children of God.

To better illustrate, let me tell you one of the stories my grandmother Lola Ina told me when I was a young boy:

Once there lived a wealthy man. He was unkind, greedy, and selfish. He had a driver whom he did not pay well. The driver was a good man; he was thankful for having a job to feed his family. But his income was too small that when he got sick, he could not afford the medical costs and he died. The rich man who was well-fed and could afford to stay healthy died many years later.

In the gates of heaven, the rich man was very nervous as he was met by Saint Peter. He was afraid he won't be admitted to heaven.

"We welcome you to heaven," said Saint Peter.

"We have prepared a residence here for you. I will show it to you. Follow me." The rich man felt greatly relieved.

Along the way, he saw his driver smiling and waving at him from a very beautiful and big palatial home.

As they walked further along, the houses were getting smaller and smaller. "Where is my house?" he asked. Saint Peter pointed ahead and kept walking. He was getting nervous again as he watched the small houses along the way.

When they reached a small shanty consisting of scraps of wood, iron and cartons, Saint Peter said, "This is your home."

"What!?! Why does my driver have a big beautiful place and I have only this?"

Saint Peter said "When you were alive, your driver sent us plenty of beautiful and good materials. We can build only this from the few and poor materials you sent us."

This is Story 1.5 in my e-book [Healing our Divided Planet](#).

5.7 Soulful Living

What happens when we intentionally, or by daily habit, increase those soul moments? What do we call our existence when we live as a soul/spirit more than we live as a body? Let us call it “soulful living.”

Soulful living does not mean forgetting to take care of your bodily needs: good health, good food, good sex, good entertainment, etc. It means shifting our focus to who we really are—as souls/spirits or as children of God.

Here are some examples of practices we have covered in other practices that can fall under soulful living:

- Living more “positive quiet moments” (Practice 1.1),
- Making a gratitude list (Practice 3.4),
- Spending more time with nature—your plants and pets, your garden, a park,
- Listening to God to discover our next life mission or best course of action, instead of asking God this or that when we know that God knows better than we do what is best for us and is already giving it to us (Practice 1.5),
- Performing “random acts of kindness”, and
- Acts of creativity resulting in your learnings, legacies, or loves (Practice 4.8 and 7.3).

I am confident that you have experienced soulful living at one time or another, but you may be unaware of it. Perhaps you didn't recognize this kind of living or you forgot them. But now that you are aware, what practices or actions do you do that fall under SOULFUL LIVING? Make your own list.

5.8 Feelings Bring You Back to Soul

We forget or miss soulful living (see Practice 5.7) because of our predominant body-centered consciousness. An advantage of virtual meeting is that it reduces physical interaction and allows you to focus more on ideas and especially on FEELINGS. Feelings take you away from physicality and bring you back to soul.

I have three weekly classes at UP Diliman. Most of my graduate students are working students. They are often tired and stressed after a day's online work when we start our 6–8:30 pm classes. I start the discussion with a warm-up question that I announce in advance. I change the question every week. The warm-up questions are meant to help them relax, FEEL good about themselves, and remember happy moments. Here are some examples:

- What are your unique skills or talents? Or, what do people often ask you to do for them?
- Tell us about your last achievement, big or small, that you FEEL proud of?
- How do you motivate yourself to study?
- What was your “peak life experience” when you FELT greatest joy and fulfillment?
- Tell us something interesting, unique or surprising about yourself.

In an online KM course I gave for government leaders, I decided to break my presentation with many stories about my experiences related to the topic. One or two continuous hours of online watching a PowerPoint presentation is too boring. When I tell a story, I stop the screen sharing and they see me and I see them as I tell the story. Then I go back to screen sharing and resume my presentation.

Stories convey FEELINGS, lived experiences, surprises, human insights, others. Lectures mostly use the mind; stories as you see each others' faces can better convey FEELINGS and heart.

"The shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story." That is according to Fr. Anthony De Mello, an Indian Jesuit priest.

5.9 God is Never Distant

"God is watching us from a distance," goes a Bette Midler song in 1987. That is the physical perception of the ego-mind. If instead you constantly practice soulful living (see Practice 5.7), you will experience God practically every day:

- Happy "coincidences" happen very often.
- Your feeling, sensing, and intuition functions become sharper as you intently watch for His next cues.
- Answers to your questions come in through various channels.
- Dreams often take on meanings and convey messages.
- Personal problems or difficulties clearly point to weaknesses that need to be overcome or learned from.
- The right people, the right information, and the right opportunities come in at the right time as you pursue your next life mission.

You may be surprised but often in writing Facebook posts that were compiled into this @@book, I do not know what I will write next. The right idea comes to me early in the morning as I wake up. The words then form in my mind as I drink my morning coffee. By the time I sit down in front of my laptop, I just go ahead and type the next FB post. I don't feel alone because I have co-authors working with me.

Since my 1987 miraculous healing I have developed a personal relationship with Yeshua and His numerous helpers. You, too, can do the same. Your guardian angel too has been patiently waiting all this time. God is NEVER distant. God is constantly with us and in us, and we are in God.

"In Him we live and move and have our being," said Saint Luke in Acts 17:28.

Chapter 6 – HOW TO BETTER LISTEN TO OTHERS

Here are three successful people who consciously listen as a matter of habitual practice:

"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen." — writer Ernest Hemingway

"I make progress by having people around me who are smarter than I am and listening to them. And I assume that everyone is smarter about something than I am." — industrialist Henry J. Kaiser

"Most of the successful people I've known are the ones who do more listening than talking." — businessman and statesman Bernard Baruch

"Better listening" to people is a good way to start learning skills that are useful later in better listening to God (see Practice 1.3 in Chapter 1 on How to Better Listen to God). Listening is something we do every day, especially these days when we are locked in our houses with our family. Community quarantine or "lockdown" gives all of us a wealth of free time!

Listening is something we do every day since we were small and we tend to think we already know how to listen. Instead of debating or arguing this point, or citing this or that Internet source or whatever, let us find out if there is such a thing as "better listening to people" through experience and practice.

Here are several practices or simple experiential exercises that you can try to improve your listening skills. Try. You may like them.

Practice 6.1 200% Listening

Practice 6.2 Suspending judgment

Practice 6.3 Disinvesting your ego from "your" idea

Practice 6.4 Generative dialogue

Practice 6.5 Process partnering

6.1 200% Listening

When someone is saying something to us, it often happens that we do not pay full attention because while he/she is talking, we are mentally preparing what to say next. We must listen first with 100% attention.

It often happens that while someone is saying something, it will trigger an internal conversation inside our heads: commenting, judging, agreeing or disagreeing, recalling, elaborating, criticizing, etc. This goes on and on with little conscious control on our part. It is unfair to the person talking. We must learn to be 100% aware whenever any internal conversation tries to start itself and then we make a conscious decision to stop it.

The other morning, as I sat drinking my morning mocha and practicing to quiet my mind, I could hear the barking of a dog and the roar of a distant motorcycle. I could feel the gentle morning breeze passing through the windows. This relaxing respite from my usually noisy and cluttered mind was interrupted by my mind's comments about the dog, speculations about the motorcycle and plans of what I need to do today. It is amazing, and exasperating, how the mind ceaselessly makes comments, judgments, expectations, guesses, etc. It dilutes pure experience with concepts after concepts. Says Fr. Anthony de Mello, S.J., "From the moment you teach a child the word 'tree' he can no longer fully experience a tree."

A 200% listening is giving the one talking our 100% external attention while at the same time being 100% internally attentive to stop any mental processing inside our head. A 200% listening is reflecting while listening.

Give it a try. Give it many tries. Practice, practice, and practice.

6.2 Suspending Judgment

Admit it. We can easily judge people and circumstances. This section will open your eyes to the advantages of suspending judgment in order to better listen.

Step 1. Get your [MBTI \(or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator\) score](#). The last letter of the personality score is either a P or a J. If you are a J, especially with a big percentage then you have a tendency to judge and jump quickly to a conclusion or decision instead of first listening and studying the situation. You will benefit most by practicing how to suspend judgment.

Step 2. When someone you know starts to say something, you may have prior experience with this person and you immediately cast judgment. Some internal conversation may start inside your head. For example:

"Here he is again, trying to push his beliefs on me."

"He keeps telling stories where he is the hero."

"She is always correct and right, no matter what you say."

"This guy is very opinionated."

Etc. etc.

Hold your horses. Stop pre-judging this person. Listen first. You may be learning something new or you may be seeing the same thing from a different perspective. This person you know may be telling you something true and useful this time.

When anyone starts to criticize you or your action, your common or usual tendency is to close your mind and immediately defend yourself. What if the criticism opens an opportunity for you to learn and improve yourself? Immediately closing our mind also closes that opportunity.

Step 3. As you practice 200% listening (see Practice 6.1), you will catch your reactions to and judgment on people. Note your judgment but keep on listening 200%.

What is important is to practice the skill of awareness the moment your mind makes a judgment. Says Fr. Anthony de Mello, S.J. in his book *Awareness: the Perils and Opportunities of Reality*.

“...What you judge you cannot understand. ...If you desire to change what is into what you think should be, you no longer understand.”

Step 4. After the person has said his or her piece, and you have listened 200% and heard everything that was said, only then can you make a judgment. You still make a judgment but you postpone or suspend it. The statement you heard may be wrong—as you may have correctly pre-judged—but it may also be right, in which case you will have lost the opportunity to learn if you pre-judged and closed your mind too early.

Remember, you will never learn if in your mind you always disagree with a person even before he says anything. Remember, too, that you will never learn from someone who—in your mind—always agrees with you. When there is disagreement and there is also willingness to listen, then the potential for learning is there.

6.3 Disinvesting Your Ego from “Your” Idea

A big stumbling block in many conversations is defending “your” idea or attacking “his” idea. The best idea is the one that better passes reality check and utility check, not on who “owns” the idea and not on whether the one who “owns” the idea has a higher rank or authority. Finding the better idea requires that everyone disinvests their egos from “their” ideas.

When the common purpose of a team is to improve its work performance, the question is not who made a mistake or whose mistake it was, but the real question is this: What is the better action that can restore or improve team performance? Focus on how to improve a work process; do not focus on who made a mistake or whose mistake it was. It is about seeking a better “how” than finding “who” can be blamed.

People do not intend to make mistakes. They do not wake up in the morning and say to themselves: “Today, I will make a mistake.” When people do make a mistake, very often it is due to one or more of the following:

- Incomplete or missed information
- Unclear or unwritten directions
- Mismatch between task and competence
- Miscommunication (ambiguous sending, multiple interpretation, lost in translation)

However to convert mistakes into learning opportunities, the focus must be on improving a process or system instead of blaming people. A “blame game” leads to a fruitless war between egos where listening stops and learning never happens.

Another stumbling block in listening is the belief in someone that he knows more than the rest. Instead of everyone holding a piece of a jigsaw puzzle and trying to put together what they know into a bigger picture, this someone believes that he has all the jigsaw pieces and he can form the complete picture all by himself—which is very rarely the case. More likely, this is a case of bloated ego or feeling of power and authority.

More often, the best idea can come from a group with diverse views and where everyone in the group is willing to listen to one another and find the best way to piece together what they individually know into a larger and better group knowledge. This can happen if each one is willing to let go of “his” jigsaw piece to form “our” bigger and better picture—which is the next Practice 6.4 on Generative Dialogue.

6.4 Generative Dialogue

In his book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, William Isaacs outlined four stages of group communication.

FALSE HARMONY is where a group agrees on the idea of the person with authority, power or forcefulness prevails, or of the persons who form the majority. In this stage the group members value group harmony and peace over truth, and peer pressure prevails over individual right to be heard.

DEMOCRATIC DEBATE is where the group allows an individuals' freedom of speech but because of ego investment on their own ideas and inability to give up one's idea for a better idea, the result is endless debate.

REFLECTIVE EGALITARIANISM is where group members do reflective listening (or 200% attention) and are willing to put their ideas to reality check and utility check. If a better idea is more workable, they are willing to give up their idea and replace it with the better idea. Members can combine their own ideas to come up with win-win combinations. Unlike the first two stages, real listening and learning starts to take place. However, ego investments in "their" ideas are still present.

GENERATIVE DIALOGUE is where group members disinvest their ego from individual ideas and the group is able to work together trying to combine their individual knowledge like jigsaw pieces into a larger and better picture. A 200% listening and suspending judgment take place. Willingness to place any idea to reality and utility checks is present. The result is a group co-creating a group product superior to any single idea individuals have at the start.

To summarize, a generative dialogue is reached through the following practices by each and every member of the group:

- 200% listening: reflecting on one's own thought processes and assumptions
- Suspending judgment: listening first before jumping to any conclusion
- Disinvesting ego: individual idea gives way to a better group idea, willingness to desist from the common tendency to want to be always right or correct.

The tests of what is a "better" idea are reality check (how scientific knowledge is tested, revised and developed) and utility check (how technologies are tested, revised and developed). Ego, power, and authority have nothing to do with it.

6.5 Process Partnering

Sometime in 1998, two new lady friends invited me to drive up to Tagaytay City very early in the morning to listen to the "Pink Sisters" sing during the six o'clock Catholic morning mass. There were very few people in attendance. The church was less well-known and crowded than it is today. The nuns sang very beautifully. It was a fine, quiet morning with a cool weather.

After the ceremony, the three of us strolled in the lawn shaded by big trees in the nearby Retreat House of the Society of the Divine Word. In our conversation, we asked the question, "How can we make a difference in the world today?" We agreed that many of the problems in the world today were produced by actions and decisions by people, which in turn were determined by their thinking, assumptions, and mind sets. We concluded that there was a need for people to learn how to be aware and how to manage their own thinking processes. We could make a difference by helping people learn how to be more aware of their assumptions.

An idea was born to start a non-governmental organization. In 1999 we co-founded the Center for Conscious Living Foundation or CCLFI, which was registered at the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission on August 17, 1999. Our very first client was a top Philippine university; we gave a workshop for their top leaders on "how to discover your life mission."

The practices described in the CCLFI website are conscious living practices that we have practiced, tested, and developed over the last 20 years.

Our practice for many years has been for the three of us to meet over breakfast during which we update each other, compare notes and new insights about people and events, check on each other's personal learning and spiritual development, and share advice and solutions. It is a mutually satisfying and beneficial practice. It is a practice where the skills of empathic listening, intuitive feelings, generative dialogue, and communal discernment all come into play.

We do not have a name or label for this practice but we started to call it "Process partnering" where "Process" (with capital "P") is the series of life lessons and spiritual growth we individually experience that is visibly purposive and manifesting evidence of a loving Source or God and a host of assisting angels, guides, and helpers. While generative dialogue is at the mundane level, Process partnering is at the mundane and spiritual levels. While opening the mind and heart are skills in generative dialogue, opening to rhema (explained in Practice 1.3) is the additional skill in Process partnering.

If you have loved ones or you know friends who also practices rhema or who have also gone through these practices, you may invite them to be your mutual Process partners.

Re-read about the Process in Chapter 1.

Chapter 7 – SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

This chapter is a natural sequel to the previous chapter on Self-Transformation. It is ideal that you practice the exercises in self-transformation for several weeks or months before you proceed to social transformation.

The FB posts that are compiled in this book were motivated by my intuition and intention that the 2020 pandemic is a gateway to a global reset—resets in economic systems, in international relations, in governance, and, of course, in billions of lives. Many people are forced to slow down and rethink where they are now, and where and how they can go forward from here. Going forward is best through a group process of social transformation.

The practices in this series are as follows:

Practice 7.1 Mindful conversations

Practice 7.2 Ba

Practice 7.3 Intentional co-creation

Practice 7.4 Co-creation can be innate in you

Practice 7.5 *Dugtungan*

Practice 7.6 Generative dialogue

Practice 7.7 Rhema and communal discernment

7.1 Mindful Conversations

The Asian Social Institute (ASI) is a unique graduate school dedicated to social work and social transformation. It offers a very popular doctoral program, Ph.D. in Applied Cosmic Anthropology. What I love about this program is one of its many premises: Before practicing social transformation, a student must first learn self-transformation. Outer work, to be effective, must be preceded by solid inner work.

Mina Ramirez, ASI President, practices and promotes self-reflection among their students. I am thankful I learned phenomenological research from her and her colleagues. Phenomenological research is a tool that has become popular among social workers seeking to understand the lived experiences of communities, doctors listening to their patients' experiences, and psychologists helping people who are depressed or suicidal.

In phenomenological research, the researcher must be aware of her own biases, preconceptions and world view that she brings into the research process. The researcher avoids surveys or interviews because questions almost always inject the researcher's assumptions. She instead engages in conversations. She listens to the stories of the people. Mina innovated the *Kulandong* for this purpose. Throughout the interaction, the researcher takes notes how what she hears is being processed by her mind from the perspective of her own mindsets. Every conversation is a process that changes her own "lifeworld" and may also change the lifeworlds of people she is having conversation with.

The Japanese says that when two or more people engage in conversation, they create a “ba” or an interaction space between them. Trust and understanding is built by cultivating ba. Through good ba, knowledge can more freely flow between them and they can more easily co-create new knowledge. Ba facilitates the social construction of knowledge.

Consciously and constantly practice mindful conversations. Pay attention when you next engage in conversation. Be aware of your own biases and motives. Watch the level of trust and confidence. You are thereby entering a space full of opportunities for co-creating new realities.

7.2 *Ba*

A conversation can be a co-creative process.

When a group of people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives engage in conversation in a friendly, trustful and creative atmosphere, they can together come up with innovative ideas.

One of the chapters in the book co-authored by Prof. Ikujiro Nonaka, *Enabling Knowledge Creation: How to Unlock the Mystery of Tacit Knowledge and Release the Power of Innovation*, is on managing conversations. When I met Prof Nonaka in Bangkok, he said a good way to create *ba*—a Japanese word that means the interaction space people create when they engage in trustful conversation—is for a group to engage in conversation over a bottle of beer!

Ha ha ha!

Do you think we can create *ba* by drinking beer while having a Zoom conversation?
How do we know unless we try?

Seriously, be watchful and be observant the next time you engage in a group conversation, particularly if the group is intending to brainstorm and come up with good new ideas.

Are group members friends of one another, or are they strangers, or mixed? How open and accepting are group members? Does one member tend to judge and thereby "douse cold water" on someone else's idea? Do you sense a kind of competition or an attitude that seems like "my idea is better than yours"? What behavior and statements build trust and destroy trust?

During these conversations, be mindful in an intentional, kind, or friendly way.

7.3 Intentional Co-Creation

Engage in conversations with the clear intention to co-create new realities.

In 1998, famous healer Jocelyn Bilasano and spiritual seeker plus business woman Babes Afafe invited me to attend Mass and listen to the "Pink Sisters" sing one early morning in Tagaytay City. There was hardly anyone there at that time. It was a cool, peaceful and beautiful morning listening to the nuns sing.

Afterwards, we strolled to the nearby lawn under the mango trees of the SVD seminary. We had a most productive and co-creative conversation.

"There are so many things going wrong in the world today. How can we make a difference?"

"People are doing what they think is right, but many of them act and decide from their unrealistic, unworkable or obsolete mindsets."

"We cannot change their mindsets; only THEY can change their own mindsets IF they are aware of these."

"We must show people how to be aware of their mindsets, reexamine them and if needed, decide to change them."

That conversation, of course, was the beginning of CCLFI or Center for Conscious Living Foundation and its sister for-profit Community and Corporate Learning for Innovation (also CCLFI). After over two decades, I am ever so thankful that we made the joint intention to co-create new realities.

Egged on by this pandemic, 90 of my FB friends decided in June 2020 to engage in a co-creative online conversation. After three months, its first product consists of a set of doable and low-cost ideas useful for teachers and schools during the pandemic, followed by action on the ground whereby an FB group member coordinated the donation of computers for students of Kalinga State University who have no computers for participating in online classes.

7.4 Innate Co-Creation

Our lives are a series of ups and downs, and peaks and valleys.

When was your Peak Life Experience, when you felt greatest joy, fulfillment or even exhilaration? What were you doing then?

When we asked this question to many people from different countries, their answers fall under four categories. Look at a sample of their answers below.

1 RE-CREATING ONESELF

- Dawn on top of Mt. Kinabalu, Malaysia (USA)
- Competing in an athletic reality show; enjoying hard physical efforts (USA)
- When I graduated from college (Philippines)
- When I passed my thesis defense at UP (Philippines)
- When I was "born again" (Philippines)
- When I went to a leadership training in Japan (Philippines)
- Travelling in China and Haiti with close friends (USA)

2 PRO-CREATING ANOTHER

- Family dinner filled with food and laughter (Afghanistan)
- Wedding (USA)
- Getting to know my wife for the first time (UK)
- Travelling with my family (Tanzania)
- Lending a hand to others in need (Kenya)
- When I gave birth to my son and watch him grow each moment afterwards (Nepal)
- Adopting my daughter when she was 7 (USA)
- Leading and guiding youths to realize their potentials and succeed in life (Nigeria)

The first category (Re-creating oneself) consists of self-transformation experiences that change a person or a person's view of himself or herself. The second category (Pro-creating another) covers experiences of helping another person's self-transformation whether as a parent, teacher, or psychological counsellor. The third category (Creating something new) is all about innovation. The last category is social transformation or co-creating something with a group.

3 CREATING SOMETHING NEW

- My first job as radio producer of youth programs (Malawi)
- When I contribute to the solution of an individual or public problem (Ethiopia)
- Speak on children's rights before the UN session (Philippines)
- Winning as dance champion of our Christmas party (Philippines)
- Singing in a bar in Tagaytay (Philippines)
- Building my own house (Philippines)
- I designed a farm training kit for a rural community (Madagascar)

4 CO-CREATING WITH A GROUP

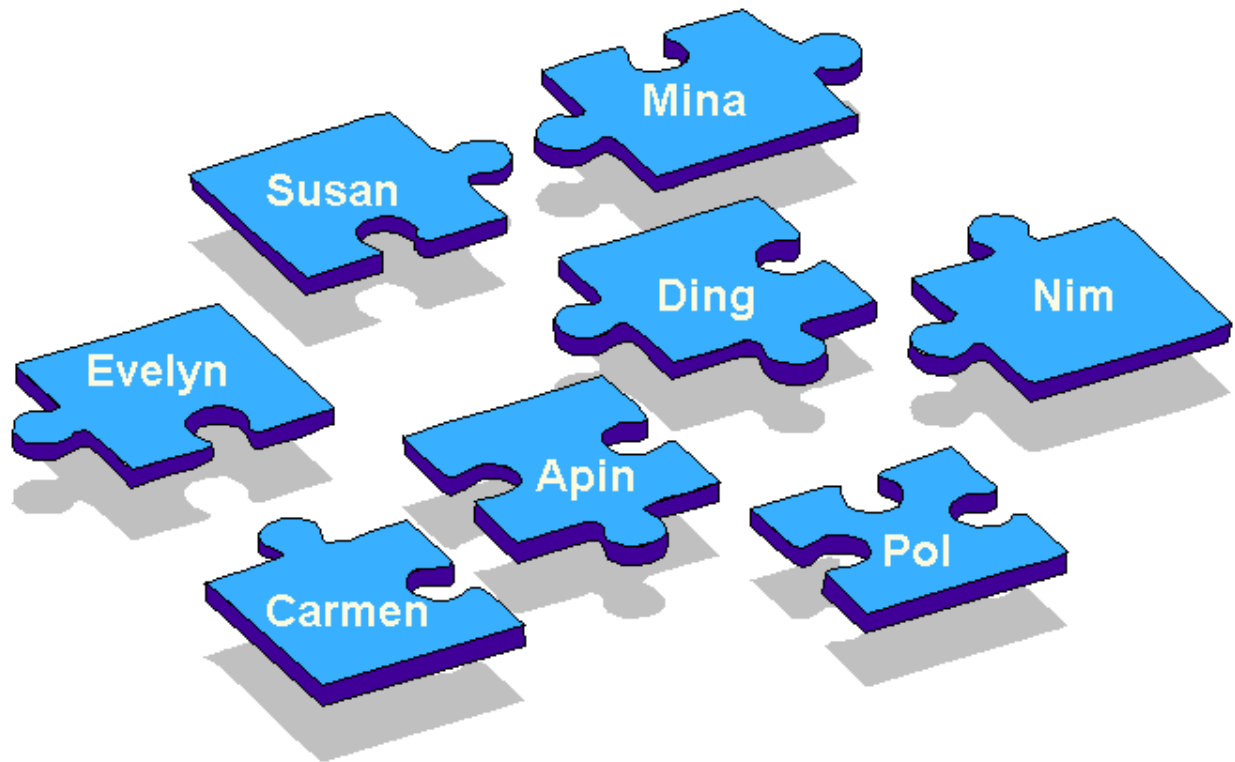
- Volunteer work in rural communities in West Niger, Africa (USA)
- Service work after Yolanda disaster (USA)
- Supporting 9 grassroots organization to unite into a consortium with vision of solving environmental woes (Kenya)
- When my club won in an inter-club competition (Zambia)
- When I am with my sister and friends (Egypt)
- I was giving my testimonies in the pulpit on what God has done in my life (Philippines)
- Getting hired in an NGO serving orphans and vulnerable children (Ethiopia)

Why are human beings rewarded by peak or utmost joy and fulfillment whenever they perform creative actions? What do you think?

Suggested practice: Reread Practice 4.8. Schedule a time and select a place where you can quietly reflect on your life. Review your life and identify its peaks and valleys. Select a peak life experience. What were you doing then? What gave you so much joy and fulfillment? Which of the four categories does your peak life experience fall under?

If it falls under the last category of co-creation then it is innate in you. Social transformation is central to your life purpose.

7.5 *Dugtungan*



There are right ways and wrong ways for a group to engage in a conversation intended for co-creation. “Wrong” simply means it is not workable. I learned the *dugtungan* type of conversation from Mina Ramirez, ASI president, and her faculty members (see Practice 7.1). They call it “*dugtungan*” in Pilipino. Roughly translated in English, it means “connecting the pieces together” similar to a jigsaw puzzle.

A number of personal habits, biases or inclinations can ruin the *dugtungan* process:

- Assuming he has more or better zigzag pieces than everybody else, or worse, thinking he has the big picture and so he does not need the pieces from others.
- Defending his piece "to the death" or, in other words, investing his ego on "his" piece.
- Unwillingness to share a piece because he believes he will lose power if he shares his knowledge, or he wants to be the best player by playing the last final piece.

There is a score of reasons and personal flaws that may disrupt or sabotage the group's co-creative process. You can see clearly that self-transformation **MUST PRECEDE** social transformation.

The next time that you are part of a group engaged in brainstorming, propose and explain the *dugtungan* process. As you practice it, watch and take note of workable and unworkable statements, behaviors, and attitudes from group members. If group members are ready and comfortable in doing a post mortem at the end of the process, then do a group self-critique where you talk about what seems to be productive and unproductive brainstorming behaviors. It is a group learning process where members practice self-reflection as well as group reflection, honesty, openness, and willingness to change so that the group can be more productive next time.

7.6 Generative Dialogue

Dialogue is the group skill of co-creating new realities.

In his book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, William Isaacs showed us how to improve on our ordinary conversations. If a group is willing to learn, it can progress along four stages. Let us review Isaac's four stages:

1. **False harmony:** conversation is dominated by the most powerful or the loudest and everyone agrees for the sake of peace and false harmony.
2. **Democratic debate:** members are given equal chances to talk and are willing to listen to one another but the conversation can become a debate because members are unwilling to let go of ego investment in "their" idea and are unable to reflect and see how much ego invested they are.
3. **Reflective egalitarianism:** the group can arrive at win-win solutions through give-and-take that preserves the values of each member
4. **Generative dialogue:** co-creating a new or more encompassing perspective that builds upon everyone's perspectives; group ownership replaces individual ownership.

To arrive at a generative dialogue, the group needs to consciously learn to make the following shifts:

FROM	TO
Separate jigsaw pieces	Complete picture
Seeing things one way	New ways of seeing
Automatic judgment	Suspend judgment
Unconscious premises	Aware of premises
Debate	Group inquiry
Individual knowledge	Group knowledge
Personal ownership	Group ownership

A group can more easily learn from these shifts if its members are self-aware and are good practitioners of self-reflection, mindfulness and self-transformation.

The practice of generative dialogue can happen in a group of members who consciously decide to learn to collaborate and learn the process as a group. It can be a long process depending on the readiness, willingness, and emotional intelligence of members.

7.7 Rhema and Communal Discernment

The best example of a group that achieved social transformation over a global scale and lasting over two millennia was the early Christians. During the first three centuries, the early Christians successfully co-created a new social paradigm at a time when Christianity was not yet defined by various councils and there were yet no organized churches and priests to guide them.

How did they do it?

Their guidance came directly through rhema and an intuitive kind of group dialogue called communal discernment (refer to Practice 1.3).

They were moved by the exhortation of Jeshua to be “the light of the world.”

Their purpose was not political, economic, scientific, or even religious. They were willing to sacrifice their own lives for this purpose. Their purpose was simply to spread LOVE.

While generative dialogue is largely an intellectually-driven group process, personal rhema with communal discernment is an intuitive, heart-driven and spiritually purposive process. Experienced practitioners of rhema (see Chapter 1) are in the position to practice communal discernment. It is better experienced than described.

CONCLUDING NOTES

After the pandemic started to sweep the globe and lockdowns were imposed in March 2020, I knew I have a new life mission to fulfill. I started a series of Facebook posts that I knew will later be compiled into a book. This is "that" book that I envisioned last March.

This is also the third book that "wrote itself" after *Healing our Divided Planet: Stories of Transboundary Learning for our Grandchildren* and *Discover Your Creative Pathway: Pursuing Your Next Life Mission*. A series of happy coincidences accompanied this third book's production. Here are examples of these coincidences:

I often wake up in the morning with a specific idea in my head on what to write about as my next FB post. In one occasion, I wake up with a clear idea that what I wrote yesterday should be corrected and how it should be corrected. Upon examining the correction, I realized how much better it was. Where did the idea come from?

Sometimes I do not know what to write or how to say draft it. I will sit in front of my laptop and just wait. Then the ideas and the words come.

I like watching YouTube videos. While watching one day, it would strike me strongly that it is what I should write about next. One morning while scanning the news in my phone and drinking coffee at Starbucks, a news item appears that perfectly supports what I was planning to write.

Concluding Notes

I was about to start the second book when I received a clear and specific idea in my head in the early morning when my mind was between sleeping and waking: “There are several authors of this book.” That idea—it sounded more like an instruction to me—led to a long process that took over two years where eight volunteer co-authors, two volunteer editors, and over 30 contributors produced a collaborative book.

I chat with my sisters in Canada and the US. In one chat episode, my sister wrote something about her experience that is an excellent example of what I was writing about. With her permission, that chat is a part of this book.

I was intending that this book be ready for free distribution as my 2020 Christmas gift to my friends. However, my editor got sick. I took the opportunity to write a series of FB posts between Christmas Eve and New Year. That series became the Introduction. As a result, the book became more coherent and organized. Things eventually fall into their right places, although we do not see it at first.

Those are but a few examples of how these books wrote themselves. It seems like I have many co-authors—both visible and invisible—writing with me. It seems they are as eager as I am to get across to you this book.

So, here it is, my 2021 New Year gift to my friends: a new You. Furthermore, I invite you to help disseminate this free book to sharing this link to your friends and loved ones: @@

About this book

This book is the compilation of Facebook posts by Serafin D. Talisayon from March to December 2020. He wrote them to help his students who were suffering from worries, fear and depression arising from the pandemic. His first series of Facebook posts were on how to manage fear and on how to boost one's immune system - based on his own personal experiences and practices. By April 2020, he intuitively knew that the pandemic will trigger a reset - both in individual lives and in the global order. His next series of Facebook posts then moved towards how to manage change - starting from personal transformation and towards social transformation.

Serafin's own personal transformation started with a life-changing miraculous healing in 1987 from three life-threatening illnesses. Since then he had developed ways of managing his own personal change. This book is his way of sharing many practices that worked for him. He is offering these practices for readers to consider trying in their own lives, not only to survive the pandemic but more importantly to create opportunities to heal, reframe and together build a New Earth.