As a young child playing hide and seek outside with my cousins and siblings, I learned an early meditation lesson: The more I stopped, and simply tuned in and sensed, directly, in the immediacy of the moment—the more focused and still I got, in body and mind-- the more I saw. And when I was clearer, everything became clearer. This was my youthful introduction to the harmony and oneness available via a heightened, wakeful, present awareness.

Right now, I’m sauntering around in Henry David Thoreau’s Concord woods and lake-rich neighborhood, losing myself and finding my true Self in the sacred transcendentalist thickets of heart and soul; there’s not much more to say. I enjoy turning the pages in the book of nature and getting into the deepest leaves and paths representing the united state of mind and body, heart and soul. Birdsong and dog-voice resonate deeply within my original goodness, my innate Buddha-nature, which I feel and know intimately. Nor is it mine alone, this boundless treasure—the big tent of global spirit.

One of my favorite poets, the mystic William Blake, sings:

“To see a world in a grain of sand

And heaven in a wildflower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand

And eternity in an hour.”

Mystics and sages of all religions and paths speak of a realm beyond change-- beyond birth and death—groundless, luminous and boundless. The awakened recognition of the changeless source is universally considered crucial to human wellbeing and higher development. I love to sit at the origin of all things, at home and at ease, naturally enjoying the entire spectacle. Hat else is there to do?
So what does awakened awareness mean in this Modern World? What does it look like in our distracting OverInformation Age? Can the non-dual awakened state be shared collectively, offering a unity consciousness and global banquet table for one and all? This earth our altar, all beings the buddhas and bodhisattvas, gods and goddesses arrayed upon it; this is BuddhaVision. What a wonderful worldview that is and can be. Emaho!

Currently, we appear to have entered a rapid growth cycle, including a nonsectarian and post-denominational organic spiritual tropism: hearts and minds, body and soul reaching not just up to the light but out, down, and spreading in every other possible direction. This is the time for collective awakening and altruism rather than mere self-help and self-improvement projects, not to mention the illnesses of selfishness and narcissism. Unfolding out of our personal identities into a more globally connected awareness, far beyond isms and schisms, we naturally self-fulfill the incisive Dzogchen pith instruction, “Always Buddha Nature, always unfolding.” This expansive interspiritual approach brings tremendous opportunity for the edification and harmonious interbeing of one and all—a high way with many lanes. In India long ago, I heard a master teacher say: “The best form in which to worship God is in every single form.” I savored that. I grokked it.

A combination of nowness—be here now, or you won’t be there then; and openness, combined with what I call “incandescent presence”, defines what we term as Awakenfulness or pure awareness. Letting go has become a buzz word, but it actually means radical acceptance, letting be by letting things come and go—not just trying to get rid of them. Acceptance has its own transformational magic, and should not be confused with mere complacence or indifference. Contentment is the greatest form of wealth, like the cosmic credit card; don’t leave home without it.

This equanimity and spiritual detachment cum acceptance can be cultivated and fully actualized thru the art and simple practice of Presencing, by intentionally paying attention, nonjudgmentally, in the present moment—observing things as they are. This implies practicing mindfulness, which is most simply defined as the opposite of mindlessness and heedlessness. Mindfulness is an attentive presence of mind—nonjudgmental, open and lucidly alert, including a friendly appreciation and intimacy. When cultivated in oneself, and in all relationships, mindful present awareness is the most potent active ingredient in Buddha’s eight-step path of awakened enlightenment. It is like the pearl beyond price, and the active yeast that leavens the entire loaf.

Someone once asked my late Dzogchen mentor, the venerable Lama Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche, how to find peace and happiness. "The whole problem is that everyone thinks their happiness and difficulties come from outside, from circumstances and conditions," he replied. "True happiness is not found there." This is Buddhist wisdom, in a nutshell.
Internalizing this can bring a higher form of sanity, autonomy within interconnectedness, and self-mastery.

Sometimes I feel that things need not necessarily always be made too clear. Thus, the even deeper and harder to grasp saying from a Mahayana Buddhist sutra (scripture), which seems fitting:

“Things are not what they seem to be, nor are they otherwise.”

My mind stops here.

Applying Buddhist wisdom is seeing things as they actually are, while simultaneously intuiting how they function and interact. If we are to develop the higher spiritual intelligence skill set needed to benefit the many on our troubled planet, it is essential that we learn to distinguish our life needs from personal wants. This frees up all kinds of energy. Otherwise we’re just redecorating our own small prison cells ... over and over again. “There is enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed,” says Mahatma Gandhi.

Buddhist wisdom teaches that we each have our karma, our fate, our character and destiny in our own hands. We are not merely victims of circumstances and conditions. What we think, say, intend and do make all the difference. It’s not what happens to us but what we make of it that makes all the difference. Everything is subjective. Everything is a teaching and a learning moment, or can be. And in our impermanent world, everything passes; nothing remains. Check it out, and see for yourself.

The Jewish Talmud says that the wisest among men is he who learns from all. We all have lots of experiences, but not everyone becomes a wise and experienced elder. Some simply become old fools: jaded, bored, tired and disillusioned. This is because not all reflect on, digest and learn from experience in the same proportion. Thus the old adage, probably stemming from Plato: “The unreflected life is hardly worth living.” Insightful wisdom is an endangered natural resource today, and we overlook it at our peril.
Dr Roger Walsh, learned consciousness researcher and meditation teacher, suggests that the unique task of our time is one in which we must learn to embody and manifest this perennial wisdom within a postmodern world. Conversely, how do we skillfully communicate new, living knowledge and technologies in order to integrate them freshly into our ancient wisdom traditions? How to act as Gnostic intermediaries, bringing the timeless universal wisdom down, like holy fire from the mountaintops, into our own time and place for the benefit of one and all?

This is like a koan, or zen-like conundrum, concerning the creative tension and even conflict between preservation, innovation, and adaptation. It’s a delicate issue in some quarters. How do we change the form and the medium without distorting the essence of the message? There will be some traditionalists who argue that nothing should be changed, that the old forms are sacred, have served us well, and should be preserved inviolate. However, using the symbols and methods of our times seems quite crucial if the essential message is to be conveyed effectively across the chasm of cultures, centuries and language.

Spirituality is nothing if it is not personal, an intimate matter of body, mind and heart. One size-for-all clothes are not necessarily fitting when it comes to individual spiritual instructions on the transformative path of polishing your unique soul, and realizing ultimate conscious evolution. The best practices are the ones that work for you, personal spiritual disciplines and exercises which you actually do until it feels as if they’re doing you. We should not be deceived by the mere wrappings, the publicity and advertising, the past life resumes of certain gurus, and so forth. To check it out for oneself and maintain a certain amount of critical intelligence is advisable. Through sincere practice we can all become enlightened, as the Buddha did. Moreover, millions have fulfilled this promise. It’s closer than we think. Even shadows are nothing but light. Why overlook this treasure trove?

We come into this world with our own 'karmgo’ (karmic cargo) and are tasked with delivering it, and thus ourselves. Discovering our authentic selves and uncovering one’s true vocation are implicit in this transpersonal existential contract. If we don't learn the lessons this time, we might very well get left back and have to repeat the grade until we do!
How shall we truly recognize and actualize our best selves, our innate Buddha nature and *original goodness*, here in this gritty world? Nine hundred years ago Tibet’s supreme yogi-saint Milarepa sang, in a high mountain cave: “The ultimate view is to observe one’s mind, steadfastly and with determination.” Everything we seek is within.

Therefore, intentional attention is essential for an illumined life. It helps us to gain objective clarity, deepen self-knowledge, and live more closely aligned with our best selves. We learn to catch ourselves and our priorities before other things catch and entangle us. With this core practice of maintaining alert presence of mind, we naturally begin to live a more balanced and measured life, slowing down, paying attention to things as they are rather than as they ain’t or how we would like them to be. We savor and appreciate more special moments, rather than staggering through our To Do lists on the perpetual motion machine known as “the treadmill of conditioning”, mistaking mere movement for meaning.

We can unfurl into incandescent nowness-awareness, rather than confining ourselves to the hut of conceptual mind afflicted by *think-aholism*. Thought is a very good servant, but a poor master, as ancient scripture tells us; we are too often under its thrall. In fact, we have become addicted to thinking, and need a higher inner power to save us. Awakened self-awareness is that very power. Authentic awareness is curative. Total nowness-awareness is the ultimate therapy, the vital catalyst for freedom and enlightenment; thus it is known as, in Tibetan, “the Buddha within”.

One moment of freedom and enlightenment is one moment of freedom and enlightenment, the Dzogchen meditation masters tell us. Remember to remember to center in the holy moment, right now; to take a breath break, creating a sacred pause in the hour, amidst the busy day; and to sink your roots deep into the good earth of this miraculous moment, imbibing its nutritious essences. Then open your good heart to fellow travelers, of all kinds, human and otherwise. Wish them well. Continue on together.

Being there while getting there is the essence of my Middle Way message, neither too austere nor too over-indulgent, not too tight or too loose. Not waiting or wishing for anything, nor looking for love in all the wrong places. A happy marriage of dynamic wisdom-oriented inquiry combined with relaxation and wonderment.
Plumbing even deeper: I ask you right now, seekers and friends and companions: Can you drop the entire project you’ve been pushing for so long?

Drop it!

Of course you’re wondering what project, which one, and so forth? Good questions for to ponder. But tell me what fell away in that very moment of inquiry, before the conceptual questions started?

For how long have we, have you, been reifying, reinforcing, perpetuating and re-creating the sense of separate self we’re afflicted by and suffer through? What’s with all this *selfing*? Does it really help? Constantly reifying and reinforcing our narrow sense of (separate) self absorbs almost all of our energy; no wonder we’re so enervated! Releasing self-grasping frees as much energy as cracking the atom.

Who’s on first, as Abbott & Costello want to know? Who’s experiencing your experience, right now—thoughts, feelings, perceptions, sensations?

Buddha-nature, the Godhead, the Christos—or shnooks and cell mates-- ... who are we?

“Now thySelf.”

May all beings everywhere
be awakened, liberated, healed, fulfilled and free;
May there be peace and harmony in this world,
and may we all together
complete the spiritual journey.
I first met my late Brother Wayne Teasdale in Chicago the early mid-Nineties. Over dinner one weekend we shared our mutual passion for practical mysticism, profound spirituality and love of the divine mystery, including the source and sole spirit or energy underlying all the multitudinous variety of religions and paths. Moreover, we shared very similar concerns and even bemusement about the flawed disorganized religions and institutions we had long been part of—in his case, Catholicism, and Buddhism in mine. Though we were familiar with each other’s works, we were delighted to discover that both of us were called to envision and further the coming together of the world’s religions and spiritual and humanistic traditions in a new way suitable to the post-modern, technological, Over-Information Era. I called it global spirit and postdenominational spirituality; Wayne termed it interspirituality, having found interfaith dialogue wishy-washy at best and too much like preaching to the choir. This new movement could and would serve a wide, universal, and hopefully highly positive global purpose, beyond the isms and inevitable schisms from competing claims of superiority, exclusivity, endtime and salvation scenarios. It could help us progressively evolve towards religion today as a force for harmony and respect, equality and the alleviation of suffering, rather than a cause of strife, violence and partisanship—a new spirituality ethical, unifying, nourishing, and effective at awakening our best inner nature; a loving force turned toward a positive future for humankind, and dedicated to becoming part of the solution and not part of the problem. A movement towards ensuring a better future to be possible, that future which begins now.

“I believe deeply that we must find, all of us together, a new spirituality. This new concept ought to be elaborated alongside the religions like secular ethics in a way that all people of good will would adhere to it.”
For my students and mentees, besides their Dzogchen meditation and related chants, prayers and practices, I have outlined this nonsectarian enlightenment program, which I call The Six Building Blocks of a Spiritual Life.

1. Daily-lish spiritual practice (meditation, yoga, prayer or something similar)
2. Spiritual study (theory and practice go together well, and support each other
3. Inner growth work (self-inquiry, journaling, therapy, support groups, etc.)

This first triad is generally seen as alone-lish. The second triad is generally with others and quite relational.

4. Group practice (community, sangha, satsang, congregational practice etc.)
5. Teacher practice (working with masters, elders, mentors, experts etc.)
6. SEVA/spiritual service (karma yoga, including good deeds such as volunteerism, mentoring, charity work, self-giving, social activism etc.)

The good news, as I see it, is that none of this requires or precludes belief or adherence to any particular religion or group; it requires no permission or authorization; and this forms the groundwork for a well rounded and grounded, harmonious and beautiful life. In fact, most of us are doing some of these things already! Even cultivating just one of these six pillars of everyday spirituality will change your life for the better. It certainly works for me.