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HONOR YOUR DEPTH



*If you want to change
your life fundamentally,
try going deeper before forcing
yourself to behave differently.*

You have probably made New Year's resolutions that you haven't kept. Perhaps you have promised to change your diet, to exercise more, or to stick to a plan of action, only to fail. You start off strong but eventually fall back into old habits, unable to continue on the path envisioned by your initial inspiration.

Actually, you have very little control over your life. Your thoughts and feelings can be intentionally shaped to some degree, but mostly you are a creature composed of habit. You can set new habits in motion, but few stick. Soon, you are back to your old patterns. Your personal characteristics can be smoothed around the edges, but for the most part your attributes are carved in flowing stone.

Your life is carved by patterns and forces playing far beyond your awareness and intention. At night, your dreams are spun without volition. During the day, you think and act in ways that are often contrary to what you intend. Seemingly random meetings and events can change the course of your entire life. Somehow it all hangs together, but it's tough to see the pattern that connects all the aspects of your life.

No matter how dearly you try to control, your life unfolds as a mystery. Why do you love whom you love, and how long will it last? Do you know exactly what you are going to say before you say it? Why are you thinking your specific thoughts right now, and what will be your very next action? The weather is easier to predict than what you will be thinking, feeling, and doing next week—or even in ten seconds.

No matter how much you try to change, your life continues to unfold mysteriously, shaped by influences far beyond your control. Stuff happens, sometimes good, sometimes bad. In any case, as you get older, you feel something missing. Perhaps you don't care any more, and you settle into your life as good or bad as it is. But if you continue to grow, then you naturally become less interested in changing the patterns of your life and more devoted to opening and giving your deepest gifts of love, right now.

Change the things you can and accept the things you can't—and eventually open to feel deeper than the things you can and can't change. With practice, you can open and offer your deepest gifts regardless of how things are.

How do you open deeper? Opening is easier to do than to describe. Where is deep? Where do you feel hunches? Where do you feel your intuition? Where do you open when you love someone deeply—what part of you opens?

Your deepest gifts of love unfold from depth, spontaneously. Love's deep openness is your source of true change.

Suppose you were trying to tell your lover of your love for him or her. You could memorize a speech and say it word for word. Or, you could write down your feelings and read them to your lover. Both of these speeches might convey the right words, but your efforts may feel somewhat contrived.

If you were face to face with your lover right now, you could try speaking straight from your heart, without memorization or reading. How freely would your love flow from your heart into words? That depends, in part, on how open your body is. With tight lips, tight fists, and tight belly, your words may be true but their tone would be squinshed. To offer your true openness as love, now and in every moment you can practice to open your body.

From your heart, feel your jaw muscles, and let go of any unnecessary tension. Unfist your hands so your palms are open to the air. Unclench your belly so your entire body swells with breath. Breathe and relax open. An open body is not limp, but is like a cat, responsive, alive, and expressive.

Your open body is more able to conduct love without obstruction. Your words of love can flow from your heart to your lover without getting trapped in a cage of tension. An open body allows your depth to emerge more easily through your breath, words, and gestures.

To allow a deeper openness to prevail, feel into your lover's depth as if using feeling-sonar to touch far into your lover's heart. Breathe with your lover, relax open with your lover, open to heart-depth with your lover, and allow your words to flow.

Feel your lover's heart opening and closing as you speak, using your words like music to bring a smile to your lover's heart, gently evoking an openness of deep trust. Your lover can feel your depth feeling their depth, and so relax open with you. Allow your poetry to spring from open depth felt as one by both your hearts.

Your spontaneous heart-deep words often convey your true love with more grace and profundity than your rehearsed attempts to speak. This is so for all the patterns of your life.

For instance, if you are trying to change the patterns of your diet without feeling deeper, your changes will probably be superficial and clumsy. Many of your eating patterns are based on stress, loneliness, and hurt, as well as routines dictated by your schedule. When you feel deeper, then deeper expressions of love can emerge through your life—and through your style of eating.

Imagine that your lover has jilted you, and now you find yourself stuffing cookies in your mouth. First, locate any tension in your body. Feel the softness of your tongue, neck, and belly. Breathe and open your body.

Now feel deep into your heart, into the place where you feel deep love. Even if you don't feel love right now, feel into the place where you *would* feel love. Open to feel your deep heart. When you can feel your deep heart, even if your

are hurting, allow yourself to let down your defenses, to feel whatever you are feeling fully, with no resistance.

Breathe as you feel open. Hurt and open. Breathe and open. Be open as whatever you are feeling. Allow deep openness to emerge through your tongue, neck, and belly. Allow openness to pervade your body as you would allow music to move through you while dancing. Allow your body to be lived as openness, as the flow of deep love opening outward from your heart, through your belly, hands, feet, and mouth.

You might forget to open, start thinking about your lover who betrayed you, and automatically tighten your belly, scrunch your face, and put a cookie in your mouth. As soon as you can remember, feel into your depth of heart, open, breathe, and allow your heart's deep feeling to open out through your entire body, even as you chew your cookie.

As openness, you will chew differently. You will swallow differently. The tense edge of reactive emotion will soften in the openness pervading outward from your heart through your skin. Open your skin to feel outward into the room. From your heart, through your belly, toes, hands, tongue, and face, feel outward, as if you were the space in the room, and beyond. Offer yourself as openness to all.

Practice this opening while your emotional patterns of hurt and your tense patterns of eating attempt to reassert themselves.

If you want to change the way you eat, practice opening, even while your eating patterns continue. Allow new patterns to emerge, spontaneously, moment by moment, from the openness of your depth. Practice opening with great discipline and allow your life-patterns to emerge spontaneously, from depth, as an open offering of love to all.

If you persist in this practice of deepening, your superficial patterns of thought, emotion, and action will be replaced by deeper, more loving, more gifting patterns. In any moment you lose your depth, your old habits reassert themselves. Even so, the practice isn't to fight against the old patterns of eating, but to feel more deeply and then open *as* that depth, from your heart, through your entire body, and outward to all.

If you are not living the life-habits you deeply want to, it may be because you are not yet opening consistently and allowing your deep heart to emerge through your body, moment by moment. Practice feeling, opening, and offering openness outward in every moment, breath by breath. Then, your life unfolds with grace and force, spontaneously patterned by the profound mystery opening out from your depth.