

Becoming the Truth

By Tony Eastmead



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Becoming the Truth – An Introduction

Chapter One:

The words in the following chapters are based on my reflections on what is often described as a spiritual journey (apply whatever label works for you), towards a rather ill-defined goal referred to with names like enlightenment, awakening or self-realisation, although I much prefer the more neutral description of it as the *Truth*.

The inspiration for these words only happened more recently as for much of the last thirty-eight years since I started this quest, I didn't think there was anything I could contribute to the subject. That changed about three years ago when I decided to edit and publish a book my mother Amy had written called *A Journey to Truth* containing the observations and discoveries made on her path of self-discovery. I had previously taken no interest in the recorded insights of this journey (i.e. I am not a great consumer of books on the subject) so it came as a surprise to read parts of Amy's book that I could relate to. Some of these matched earlier periods in my life that were especially difficult, though I hadn't equated them to anything 'spiritual' at the time, while others applied to more recent changes.

I particularly connected to words written by Bernadette Roberts, an author Amy quotes a lot in her book, who describes her own journey in a way that I find more comprehensible than many others who write on the subject. I have therefore followed in Amy's footsteps and used Bernadette's insights extensively in this document, mostly extracted from her book *The Experience of No-Self*.

I have a number of reasons for writing this manuscript. Firstly, in a purely selfish way, I have found the process of writing has been useful to evaluate my current state and view of the world, which has altered substantially over time and continues to do so. This has come about despite not having a strong urge to undertake a personal-development path, unlike Amy who spent decades researching and exploring the subject of the Truth.

Secondly having reached an identifiable milestone as described by others, I have spent some time looking back on how this has happened. In particular, I wanted to examine my total misconceptions about what discovering the Truth might look like (not that I have I hasten to add) and the massive changes that need to happen to strip away the illusion of what we think is normal and reveal what actually is.

Thirdly I thought it might be useful to describe my journey to this point in everyday language rather than the often-obscure accounts of the many people who write and talk about the subject. I find they frequently share experiences and teachings using words full of symbolic meaning and distracting side-tracks seemingly with the intention of obscuring the Truth from the reader rather than guiding them to it.

I have also written this document largely without reference to any religious, spiritual or other disciplines because I haven't followed any formal path myself, apart from my early days with a group

called Siddha Yoga. In contrast, Bernadette writes about her journey from a Christian point of view, which I personally find distracting, although her core words are invaluable, while Amy incorporates a broad range of disciplines into her book dipping into both eastern and western influences. Others are Buddhist centric and there is a whole range of alternative mainstream choices such as Byron Katie's 'The Work' or the words and teachings of Eckhart Tolle both of whom claim to have reached some form of enlightenment.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, there are aspects of the transformation required to move through the stages I describe that can be either termed spiritual progress or mental breakdown. I came upon these transformative changes totally uninformed and unknowing and as a result, spent years on medication as well as periods of working with psychologists. I had 'normal' life stresses that contributed to my mental state, as we all do, but looking back as I do in this book there were also some aspects that clearly involved a shift in my perception and a breaking down of the affective system ('affect' is a concept used in psychology to describe the experience of feeling or emotion) associated with the entity we label the 'self'. Had I understood what I do now that transition might not have been any easier to live through but it would have been an informed and maybe more positively viewed process than it was.

It is my belief that there may be people in a similar circumstance who are being treated for or think they have some worrying psychological symptoms, particularly around disassociation, when in fact they are in the process of moving into a new phase of life as intended. My hope is that someone reading this who could be thinking they're a lost cause might realise that they are actually a chrysalis on the verge of becoming a butterfly in one of the most mysterious transformations of life.

Finally, this manuscript is my payback to Amy for reaching out to me through her words and continuing to be my mentor even after her death. As my mother stated in her book in 1999:

I really started this diary of quotes and thoughts and intuitions both so that I could look back on the subtle transformations that have and do occur day by day, but also so that perhaps it might be a guide and help for others who are passing through the same uncharted waters.

However, it is described, with hidden meanings or not, this has been and continues to be an extraordinary journey that has changed the foundation of my life. Yet this trip started in a very casual way. This is my story.

What is the Self?

Chapter Two:

Updated: 8 February 2019

I have modified and expanded on the words I use in this introduction relating to thoughts in a newer chapter called *Metadata and the Mind*, Chapter 13. What I write here is still relevant and forms part of my evolving understanding, so I have left it as I wrote over a year ago.

As the basis for this book is the description of a journey that takes one to a reality beyond our concept of whom we think we are I thought that a few words on that concept might be a good idea.

Firstly, just to get the terminology out of the way, the 'self' Bernadette and others talk about can also be given names such as ego, me, or I, along with other labels, or a specific identifier like *Tony Eastmead*. I have gone mostly with *self* because it ties in with many of the quotes I share, but as always use whatever terminology that works best for you. I will write about the *self* in greater detail shortly, but as a starting point, its definition in the context of this document is the physical and mental package we identify as that unique 'me' entity, which exists separately from everything else in our world.

I will also use the expression *mind* but I don't use this solely in relation to the act of *thinking* or *thoughts*, these being totally neutral in their **pure** state. Like clouds passing across the sky thoughts can be viewed by an observer but in themselves, they have no power to impact us. If we only use this very limited interpretation of *mind* it is a very benign definition and the mind is anything but that.

I prefer a broader definition of mind, still with thinking as the core, but thinking that is energised with the two powerful elements of memories and emotions. A *thought* will often draw on stored memories, which are brought into the *now* to be re-lived, but they only become a tangible reality once an *emotion* is attached to them and it is this spontaneous melding of the two that then drives our actions and reaction. These three components when combined give life and certainly to the *self*, the person we literally *think* we are.

I learned that without any feelings to back it up, the mind is absolutely powerless to affect a single thing. Bernadette.

Applying logic to this supposition, if we dissolve this package, which only exists because of the *mind*, the linked *self*-identity must fade as well. All of this may sound confusing or bizarre at this early stage of the book but stick with it and I will expand as we go along, which may or may not clarify things!

How might this '*self-ness*' relate to everyday life? I, like most people never questioned the reality of *me*. Like everyone I lived as a complex and unique mix of characteristics contained within the individual physical body, I and others called Tony, part of the world that surrounded me but separate from it. I literally mean separate. We think that we are this body that ends at our skin and everything else is outside and envelopes us in a 360-degree panorama of reality. All our senses and mental certainties support this view of the world. We believe that there is a *me* (the subject) and then there is everything else (objects) and this duality is what we accept every moment of our waking state. It is the reality we have lived for as long as we can remember.

Within this body, our world is created moment by moment by the *mind*. We process sensory input through a unique set of filters based on our life experience and conditioning. These filters are based on our memories, both conscious and subconscious, the preconditioning we carry with us and the outcome of this automatic sensory processing triggers our reactions and emotions to what life presents us with, as I have stated before. These reactions are either felt internally (emotional) or expressed externally (actions) or both, as a result of that input. We are therefore a construct of our minds – take the *mind* away and what would be left? Certainly not the *me* personality we now take for granted.

Our individual existence and *self-ness* are supported by the certainties of our life, such as the work we do, our relationships, our historical memories, our beliefs and so on. Based on these absolutes, we then attach defining labels to ourselves that make us uniquely *me*. In my case these would be tags such as Tony Eastmead, retired, male, Australian, sixty-two years old, living in Thailand, my likes and dislikes and so on and these form the entity that gives my body life and personality separate from everything and everyone else. The idea of living without this identifying package of self/ego is inconceivable, or so I thought.

I can't stress how totally central this concept of *self-identification* is in the way we believe our lives to be and how we think the world works. To suggest that everything that makes us solidly individual and separate, the 'Tony Eastmead' in this example, might dissolve would surely be like slipping into a sort of insanity; leaving us lost, confused and frightened without a centre point, the 'I' to give us certainty and context around which our life can revolve. I watched my father become overwhelmed with dementia over a number of years and lose his connection to who he was and his world. As an illustration of the power of mind and the disastrous impact on an individual when it malfunctions, this example was as clear as it comes.

My most vivid memory of what this insanity might look like personally happened, maybe thirty years ago during a period when I was intensely involved in meditation and its associated practices. The fact that I vaguely recall this situation, when most else has faded into blankness, is a testament to the impact it had on me.

It was night-time, I was alone in my house in Canberra and I suddenly had an experience of losing the connection with who I was - the *self* or the *me* that I took for granted as a permanent in my life. It was as if the link with everything around me had been suddenly cut off, leaving me without the security offered by the Tony Eastmead personality that normally anchored me in reality. It was a brief period of total loss of identity and sense of humanness and as a result, it was a very scary

experience. This disconnect didn't last long thank goodness and my normal world returned much to my relief.

Having experienced a loss of *self*-identity even temporarily and the fear that resulted how is it possible that anyone could live without this central foundation that makes us who we think we are and still function as a human being? Not only that, but why would you want to!

The odd thing is that not that long ago I had absolutely no idea that this concept even existed, let alone my asking questions about how it might work in reality. There is **no way** I had a goal to achieve an altered state of reality resulting in dissolving Tony, the person I had lived with all my life, but surprisingly (for me) this is what has happened! This transformation has been a completely unplanned by my conscious self and at moments unwanted and my understanding of what occurred has only come through my reading after the event and discovering words that matched what I was already experiencing. Passages in Bernadette's book that made no sense two years ago now do because they describe the world in which I now live, not as a brief moment of altered consciousness but as a permanent and unalterable reality, whether I like it or not.

So, before we delve into the *no-self* aspects of this journey I thought that we would take a brief look at how you might get started on this journey of *self-discovery*.....I thought I would use a non-threatening description in this early part of the book. The answer is probably in a very laid-back way as I did!

The Red Pill or the Blue Pill

Chapter Three:

If you have watched the movie The Matrix (it's a pretty clear analogy for those that haven't) you will remember the scene at the beginning where Keanu Reeves (Neo) had to make a choice between two pills. The red pill offered Neo would awaken him to the reality of life while the blue left everything as he thought it was.

You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.

The premise of the start of the movie is that Neo is struggling with the same feeling some of us may also have at moments that there must be something more to life than the everyday we experience.

Neo is feeling that the world is unreal, that there's something missing. He's been searching for something, and if he doesn't take the offer now, he's going to return to his old life where 'he's not sure if he's awake or still dreaming'.

I am not suggesting that the meaning of life is detailed in a Hollywood movie; a more unlikely scenario is hard to imagine. However, the analogy works well in this context because at some stage in your life you may be offered or have already been presented with the same pill choice as Neo, although it will most likely be in a far subtler form. What may come as a surprise to you when you look back later in your life is that you casually chose the red pill, usually because it was offered in a very non-threatening sweetie wrapper. Maybe you overlooked the small print warning about rabbit holes, but more likely that part of the package wasn't even mentioned!

The trigger for this pharmaceutical moment could be a result of many possible scenarios. It might be a something major, a personal crisis such as the loss of someone you love or the overwhelming fear of inevitable death, as it was with my mother:

I was in my 50th year [1973] when I woke one night with the overwhelming realisation that I was going to die. Death was not imminent, but it was inescapable. It was an appalling realisation, and the naked terror of it was absolute. For the next six months, I was haunted by a psychological blackness.

Alternatively, maybe you feel dissatisfaction with life, a total flatness with whatever materialises or an elusive feeling that life has so much more to offer beyond the never-ending accumulation of physical things and striving for new emotional highs. It could also be as basic as wanting to advance your circumstances at work, improve sleeping or find that perfect partner. Whatever the situation somehow you open yourself up to a red pill or blue pill moment.

In my case, this scenario happened in 1980 when my mother suggested I join a meditation group as a way to assist with my depression, a condition that I had experienced on and off for a lot of my early adult life. For me, the red pill came in a comfortable meditation wrapper and no rabbit holes were mentioned. As a result of this very down to earth motivator, I was introduced to an Indian guru (teacher) called Swami Baba Muktananda and a path called Siddha Yoga, which incorporated a range of disciplines centred around meditation to connect with and develop a state of inner peace.

The next few years were spent in a very concentrated and focussed practice of Siddha Yoga because I applied the normal logic that the harder one worked on a project, even if a spiritual one, the better the outcome in a quicker time frame. Over time my involvement broadened and my initial expectations of continued meditation expanded beyond just being a solution to depression to a broader spiritual destination. However, because the structure of this path of exploration was contained within an Indian spiritual philosophy and as unlike Amy, I wasn't academically minded enough to delve into the literature on the subject, I had only a vague idea of what this theoretical endpoint might look like. *February 2019: Nearly forty years later it is my belief that even had I been a reader, many of the works on this topic (as I touched on in Amy's book) are misleading and do not provide clarity about either the process or the end result.*

It is only more recently that I have discovered that the destination is actually nothing like the one I was expecting to reach based on my cursory reading of the spiritual sales brochures in earlier times and this might apply to others reading these words.

My misconception was that by being a dedicated meditator (substitute whatever discipline you are following) and doing the practices, at some point there would be a final internal big bang self-realisation/enlightenment moment. This would be the payback for all my hard-spiritual work and would become my new reality in the form of an uplifted life full of all the good stuff - joy, love, bliss, energy and happiness to the exclusion of all the bad stuff such as anger, fear, jealousy, depression and hatred. I expected to still be *me* but a better and happier me.

Instead, I find myself experiencing a whole different scenario that was impossible to conceive or believe at the beginning of the journey because it falls totally outside all the criteria, I would have considered normal, logical and sane. In fact, during the period I call the Transition, which I describe later, I experienced moments of almost anger at where I found myself. I hadn't been told this is what would happen and I certainly wasn't sure it was how I wanted my life to be. If this sounds very negative don't think that I despair now! Although my current situation may not be what I had expected it has been transforming and after acclimatisation, it has become perfectly natural. I will explain all later.

Let's move on. In the following chapters, I will touch on the three stages I use to describe my journey so far and then expand on some of the areas I feel need more explanation to give a better understanding of the changes I describe.

I believe that there is limited usefulness in going into the minute details of a journey such as mine even if I could as much of it is forgotten. Although there may be some aspects that might run in parallel with others, the reality is that each person's path is so individual that one list of experiences is unlikely to be repeated. For example, my mother and I were both involved with Siddha Yoga at much the same time and followed a path with meditation as its core, yet when I read her book *A Journey to Truth* the daily entries in contains detail a life that had little in common with mine although I can relate to many of her insights. Bernadette Roberts has been invaluable, but much of her journey has involved her trying to fit experiences into a Christian framework, something that has no relevance for me.

So rather than turn this into a historical saga of my life I will touch on the stages of this journey that I believe could be broadly common to many on this path in whatever form that might present itself. So, to repeat myself because I think it is important, keep in mind that each of our progress stories and milestones will be unique, so this isn't intended to be a definitive statement of how things unfold for you and it certainly isn't a how to guide to anything:

I don't think we should get locked into any stage theory; it is always someone else's retrospective view of his or her own journey, which may not include our own experiences or insights. Our obligation is to be true to our own insights, our own inner light. BR

The three stages I identify as clearly unique periods on my journey so far and write about in detail are:

Stage One - The Inner Journey: An intense period of working on practices aimed at discovering an internal place of stillness. I used these disciplines as an inner break from the world and as a base from which to tackle the challenges presented to me externally. I still lived in duality with an inner core of peace touched on in meditation and then an external life trying to cope with all the usual challenges of the everyday. I felt that I was on a path to an ultimate transformative experience, but I wasn't very clear about what that might look like.

Stage Two – Self-destruction: My inner search continued, but in a very haphazard way compared to my discipline of the past. For decades, I wouldn't have described myself as being on any path, although I did maintain an inner connection to Siddha Yoga and its practices. During this time, I went through an unknowing process of *self*-destruction that was necessary to move into the next stage.

For much of this period I was intensely unhappy and in later years some of this unhappiness was generated by my increasing isolation from all the emotions that kept me anchored to and engaged with life as I knew it. For any of you who have listened to the words of Eckhardt Tolle or read his books, you will recall that his earlier life, culminating in a final and permanent transformative

experience, had deep depression as its foundation. I guess that if the world is exactly as you want it to be you aren't motivated, consciously or subconsciously, to look for alternatives to change it.

Stage Three – Living with No-Self: As Stage Two came to an end there was a period when I alternated between it and Stage Three, a process I call the Transition, a most uncomfortable time as the negative forces of the mind fought to maintain their dominance and to counteract the diminishing relevance of the *self*. This transition eventually passed, resulting in a period of acclimatisation, which led to a new experience of reality. Since then I have settled into a way of being that is very different from before and deepens the longer I remain in it, which is where I now find myself.

Stage Three is memorable in that it represents the first time that an altered perception of life didn't just happen temporarily while undertaking formal practices such as meditation, but has now become a permanent state of being and those historical disciplined practices have now become irrelevant.

Stage Four and beyond. I believe that there is more to come and I write about that in a separate chapter titled *Where to Next?*

Stage One – The Inner Journey

Chapter Four:

My Stage One was based on a path of meditation, so my observations are worded accordingly. I have touched on alternative disciplines, but as these are outside my personal experience, I have only mentioned them in a very broad way.

In my case, Stage One lasted a number of years and I would call it the more comfortable part of the journey:

The onset of the transformation process — when the larva enters the cocoon, so to speak. BR

I found that, unlike Neo in The Matrix, by choosing the red pill of Siddha Yoga I noticed little or no immediate transforming effect. Existing reality didn't suddenly fade to be replaced with another, which, if you have seen the movie is probably a good thing. Life continued much as it always had with not one rabbit hole in sight. You will most likely have found the same after your red pill choice.

Probably like me when starting your self-improvement journey, you will have set yourself a personal goal to give purpose to the formal discipline you are undertaking in whatever form that takes. This could be a goal on the everyday level, such as reducing stress, bringing more joy and happiness into your life, improving confidence or beating depression or maybe it is aimed at the more esoteric such as wanting to achieve a spiritual goal of inner peace and stillness or even that big bang final enlightenment moment.

Whatever you set as the motivator this initial period is most likely going to be one of settling in and learning the ropes. In my case, I found by joining an organised group such as Siddha Yoga this acclimatisation was easier because I was following in the footsteps of others and had the support of similar minded people. Books, courses and reference materials were available if required (not my strong point I have to say) and people were around to answer any questions that came up. This is not to say that in this more structured environment, our experiences will follow a predetermined set of outcomes because they won't. Each of us is unique and this process of self-development will take us on a journey that is at some level is specifically designed for our situation, although we may not know it at the time.

I call this first stage The Inner Journey because most practices aim to make an inner connection even if the disciplines taught involve external activities. Leaving aside the spiritual and taking a more grounded example, a sportsperson at a moment of peak excellence is tapping into the power contained within a state of total focus and concentration and those characteristics only exist when accessing an internal core of stillness. The Inner Journey in a non-sports related activity is the same. It is the process of turning inside ourselves using whatever form of practice we use and working

through the experiences that happen when we do. Our goal, recognised or not, is to realise a primary point within us, to touch a place of inner peace and stillness, to connect with a base of stability that we can use as a foundation for strength and sanity when we re-emerge and engage with the outside world.

We close our eyes in prayer, meditation, chanting, or contemplation or keep them open in whatever method we use and reach for a point that is beyond the every day; a centre, an inner place - quiet, still, reflective, safe, and totally absorbing. In its extreme form thinking slows or stops and nothing exists outside of that moment. The *me* dissolves as a result and takes with it all the associated memories, stresses and worldly connections. It is why meditation in its pure form or any other discipline that requires us to be one-pointed in concentration can be so restful because we access a place internally where we can have a no-cost holiday from ourselves and our life dramas!

We then come out of that state, open our eyes, literally or figuratively, become *me* again and engage with the world by returning to our normal lives. Hopefully, we have kept a residual of that inner experience to help calm and balance the pressures of living and provide guidance. In this early stage of development, a duality is still created because we still live as the *self* as I have explained before. The subject (*me*) observes everything else (*objects*) and then processes this sensory input using the *mind* to determine our emotional and physical reactions.

In whatever form this Stage One period takes, whether it's a discipline like meditation, yoga, mindfulness or something like Byron Katie's *The Steps*, or a more traditional structure like Christianity, Buddhism or Islam, this more formal phase gives you a framework to start your journey based on our notion of how things are achieved in the world. We undertake activities (*doing*) and we eventually get to an outcome (*the goal*).

So, it doesn't matter that we start out on our journey with our holy cards, gongs and bells, sacred books, and religious feelings. BR

I wrote at the beginning of this chapter that I felt this time was the more comfortable period of my journey. I say that because my analogy for Stage One is that when we join a personal development, spiritual or religious path, anything ranging from meditation to a church, it is a bit like getting on a bus where the price of a ticket is an adoption of the code of practice for that group. Once the ticket is issued the bus will transport you in air-conditioned comfort with a driver up front to set your course and steer you around the obstacles.

The road might get a bit rough in places, but in your own mind progress must be happening because you are still sitting on the bus with your nominated destination on the ticket you are holding. In some cases, the ride might well drop you at the front door of your expected endpoint, but it is only when you get out that you realise that the journey continues and you are now on the edge of the unknown without a bus, a decent map or GPS! This is what happened to me in Stage Two.

Maybe the Truth can be realised within an organised structure, but it is my belief that at some stage, you have to move beyond the words and teachings, the holy cards, bells and gongs that Bernadette

talks about or the bus in my analogy, to eventually realise That, which lies behind all of the mind chatter. This is a process that can only be fully realised by direct experience. Intellectual theories feeding our mind's endless hunger to understand everything and fit concepts into a neat philosophical framework can be useful as we progress on this journey, but the goal of this whole exercise is to become the Truth, not just read about it or explore it intellectually with our minds.

In my case, the rather vague understanding of the spiritual goal I was aiming for was based on a misconception that I have already written about. I thought that if I continued to follow the practices of meditation, chanting, being a nice person etc. at some wonderful and unexpected starburst moment self-realisation would explode into my life. It would bring with it all the benefits of that inner peace achieved in meditation but magnified and permanently incorporated into every waking moment. The huge added bonus would be the addition of all those good feelings, which we package together under the happiness label, the ultimate goal of all human beings. The end result in my mind (slightly exaggerated!) would still be a Tony Eastmead, a public servant working in Canberra (or preferably rich and retired), but I would be permanently living in a state of bliss that would allow me to engage in life happily and super effectively. I would become like one of those laughing Buddha statues, but a lot slimmer. I would still be *me*, but a contented me with smiles for everyone and a laugh for every occasion.

The problem with this scenario, even if you achieve everything I have described, including the big bang or even a small explosion of happiness flooding your life (and I never did), is that although you might think this is the final destination, in reality, you are actually only part the way along the path to the Truth! The process as I understand it through my real-life experience demands that the affective (emotional) system be dissolved in its current controlling form, not to selectively enhanced it by including the good stuff and excluding all the bad! What a huge disappointment. Understandably, I doubt this is a fact you will come across too often in the literature on this topic.

I spent years in Stage One starting with an enthusiastic period, which involved attending several Siddha Yoga public programmes each week, daily meditation, weekend retreats and a couple of periods living in an ashram (a meditation centre), one in America and one in India. I had some intense moments of inner reflection and became a proficient meditator; however, I never experienced any of the more colourful aspects that others describe, such as visions, dramatically altered states of consciousness, bliss or such. Mine seemed to be a more boring, but steady approach.

Looking back on this time I must have felt that I was achieving some positive outcomes otherwise I wouldn't have continued in such a dedicated way. What I can say is that I never consciously felt that I reached some specific limit or inner goal of this part of the journey, a destination-point of self-discovery like that described by Bernadette:

Once we come to the state of oneness, we can go no further with the inward journey. The divine centre is the innermost 'point', beyond which we cannot go at this time.

On a more mundane, but positive note, my overwhelming black depressions no longer appeared, but I was still susceptible to periods of being down. I don't know if this improved outcome was as a result of the meditation practices or just me becoming older – who can tell?

After a number of years (I have absolutely no detailed memory of this period or any other) my more formal involvement with Siddha waned, although I still felt connected to the basic tenant of working towards some sort of awakening, however ill-defined that was. I mostly stopped going to public meetings and other group sessions but maintained an on again, off again schedule of personal meditation and a connection with my teacher Baba Muktananda and after his death his successor Swami Nityananda.

So as Stage One wound down I moved into the next, a period where I thought I had lost my way but maybe hadn't. It's where that inner journey bus-ride left me with the real hard work still to do, which was nothing less than the destruction of who I thought I was. I found it a bumpy ride so let's see what it might look like with a brief detour to another topic – *The Mantra*.

The Mantra

Chapter Five:

I touch on this subject very briefly as it was relevant to me, but might be of limited interest or significance to others who aren't using mantra yoga as a method for deeper understanding.

Although my formal involvement with Siddha Yoga decreased as Stage One came to an end there was one aspect to it that maintained a presence throughout Stage Two and beyond. Siddha Yoga is a mantra-based meditation, where a sound is used to help focus the mind rather than let it wander around, which left to its own devices is its preferred state. When a mantra is given by a meditation master this sound is said to have unique energy:

In the yogic tradition, a mantra is a Sanskrit word that has special powers to transform mind, body and spirit. Translated, mantra means, 'that which, when reflected upon gives liberation.' Mantras are unique mystical formulas of sacred syllables, which were originally revealed to the Rishis (seers or sages) in the deepest states of meditation. Mantras were one of the earliest components of yoga and are quite possibly the first type of meditation that was developed.'
<http://www.yogabasics.com>

Power or not the one thing I did notice was that at some point during Stage One the mantra sound become permanently attached to my breath. The mantra is taught to be repeated silently on each in and out-breath during formal meditation sessions, but I found it became part of my non-meditative life and automatically present at all times. Funnily, when researching this section I came across some relevant words on the topic:

Mantras are said to increase in power in direct relationship to the number of times repeated. A mantra is fully empowered by becoming 'seated' in the heart after 125,000 repetitions, achieving what is called Mantra Siddhi.'
<http://www.yogabasics.com>

Don't get caught up on numbers. Like anything, we do a lot of eventually it becomes ingrained and habitual and this quote only reflects this logic. I only refer to mantras because as I moved out of Stage One, I also left behind most of the disciplines I associated with being on a spiritual path. I had a core belief that there was more to life than the superficial levels I accessed every day, but I was more engaged in that superficial world than spending time delving into anything deeper. However, what came with me into Stage Two as a constant companion was the mantra. I couldn't shake it

even if I wanted to. Looking back on this period, which in a broad sense lasted for over twenty years, this mantra companion was the main aspect of my yoga practices that stayed with me.

When I wrote earlier that this manuscript wasn't a how-to guide to the Truth, I really meant it. I have no idea why the changes that happened in Stage Two came about or why they became so intense that they led eventually to the Transition and Stage Three. I wasn't doing much in a formal sense to bring about such a process and I never even knew that such a destination existed. What was the guiding force that pushed through this revolution? Bernadette writes:

But at a certain point, when we have done all we can, the divine steps in and takes over. BR

Maybe that's as close as I can come to an answer. Substitute whatever word you like for your interpretation of divine. Maybe the mantra did have a core power to take me towards the Truth. Perhaps at some point in our search, we hit a downhill slide and, although we might think nothing is happening, on some level we are on a runaway ride to a reality unknown to our conscious self.

Stage Two for me was where the hard work really started.

Stage Two – Self-Destruction

Chapter Six:

My Life August 2001

I don't know what went wrong really. I can't remember a time when my life was right. I have had the odd glimpse of how things might be, without loneliness and emptiness but these have been aberrations that have passed leaving behind a vague memory of something better.

I sit here now feeling there is no hope or future of any kind that I can latch on to as a support for continuing this life as it is. There is not one point of connection I can make with anything that means enough to me to make the effort of existence worthwhile. Without an underlying foundation to life, the rest is really just filling time.

I am lonely most of the time and feel an emptiness inside of me. If I killed myself now, I'm not sure it would be done from a wild out of control depression. It is more tiredness and lack of interest in continuing a repeat of yesterday.

The words above are an extract from a diary entry I made over twenty years after I was introduced to meditation. It's not a great recommendation for the positive transforming power of engaging in a spiritual path, is it? At that time, I was well into Stage Two and wasn't formally practising the teachings, certainly not on a regular basis anyway, but had someone asked me I would have told them I was still engaged in discovering that nebulous blissful *self*-realisation outcome, rather optimistically based on this diary entry. In retrospect, which is an always more comfortable place review the past, these words don't necessarily reflect a failure of the process but say more about my misunderstanding about the real objective and what is required to get there. I will try to explain that rather obscure statement as we go along.

Can I ask that you suspend normal concepts and beliefs for a brief period while I detail a scenario outlining the changes I believe need to happen to allow for a realisation of the Truth. The idea is really simple but the achievement of it is the most demanding and difficult personal transformation you will ever undertake.

One: Let's say theoretically that there is a fundamental state of existence that underlies our perceived reality and I will call it the Truth. I won't get bogged down in what that state might look like because I touch on it later and it's all guesswork on my part anyway as I don't experience it. We will assume that this foundation of Truth permeates every aspect of life and is our natural state of being but we have become so *self*-obsessed and distracted that we can't access it or even recognise

its existence. We accept the existence of the air we breathe even though it is mostly invisible to the senses, unacknowledged unless absent, and absolutely essential to physical life. The Truth might be seen in the same way but on a deeper level in that, like air it is always present, but because we never feel a Truth breeze to mess with our hairstyle, it never intrudes into our consciousness.

Two: What if the only thing preventing us from realising and becoming that Truth is our assumption that we are this isolated entity of *self* surrounded by a *mind*-created world. The *mind* package of thoughts, emotions and memory combine to effortlessly create a duality where we exist trapped within a physical structure endlessly processing and reacting to all the stimuli thrown at us by everything out there. We become so absorbed in the constant theatre of these three talented actors that we are unable to stop the drama they create and never experience the space to recognise the Truth and dissolve into it.

Three: If we accept, even theoretically within this scenario, that our total identification with *self* overlies our natural state, wouldn't it naturally follow that by removing the *self* the underlying Truth would be revealed? I am suggesting that instead of having the notion of finding and incorporating the Truth into our current reality, we instead need to dissolve our current reality to discover the Truth. The analogy is that when we achieve our full realisation we are like a clear pane of glass. The mind-created *self* is like a thick layer of dirt on the glass obscuring the view of what really IS. All we see is the dirt, not what lies behind it. Remove the grime and you end up with a sheet of glass so clear that it and the view become as one.

It turns out that maybe we are not on a journey where something is added to our lives but one where everything is taken away! The self is created by our mind package of memories, emotions and thoughts. The self hides the Truth. Remove the self in its totality and you will become the Truth. Tony

Surely it can't be that simple? Well, actually I believe that it is, once the vast overlay of information that is written and talked about the subject is stripped back and we can see the underlying basics. The hard-sell for this concept is the myth supporting a fear that by removing *self*-identification we must become void, characterless and lost. A false assumption but totally reasonable based on *normal* thinking.

So, let's return to reality and see how my supposition might be supported by real experiences, including mine, which if you remember from the title of this chapter, I call my *self*-destruction.

Bernadette obviously writes extensively on the subject of the *self* and its loss as it is the basis of her book *The Experience of No-Self*. In it she suggests our connection and identification to a stand-alone identity is no more than a stage we go through before moving on:

At one point in this journey, self comes forth, contributes what it can give, then fades forever beyond reach. Self then is part of this movement, a part through

which all men must pass, and the only aspect of the movement for which man alone is responsible. But just as everything must change, the self too eventually disintegrates and dissolves into nothingness. The only thing we know that never changes or passes away is the movement itself.

This isn't as demanding a concept as it may seem. We aren't born with *self*-awareness, it's something we develop early in life. A baby's first experience is emotional, which occurs well before any sign of *self-ness*, emotions that are vital to allow it to survive at such a basic stage. Emotions allow it to recognise and respond to discomfort, hunger or pleasure, but not from a *self*-perspective because thoughts and memory have yet to make an appearance. A baby doesn't think 'I am hungry'. It is in a pure state of just being and reacts immediately and spontaneously to what it is feeling without a process of filtering or analysis. Self or ego and then superego (if you read Freud, which I mostly don't!) develop later, automatically as part of a child's personal development. So, becoming *self*-aware is a learned process and not something we are born with.

With that in mind is it then possible to unlearn, to disengage the control the *self* has over our lives and return to that observer state that we first experienced as a baby? I know where you are going after that last sentence and I am not suggesting that we return to the crib. The outcome is intelligent, knowing and responsive observation (*alert stillness* as Tolle calls it, which I really like as a descriptor) – more adult than we have ever been.

In my case, I have to believe that this process where the self '*disintegrates and dissolves*' is what can actually happen because this is the outcome of my Stage Two, although I had no idea of it at the time. This disintegration is also described by Amy and Bernadette and, as I doubt that we are the only three people in the world to go through this process, I can only say that it fits with my earlier supposition that this is a natural progression requiring the *self* to be dissolved to reveal the Truth.

My diary entry at the very beginning of this chapter really encapsulates a pretty challenging Stage Two, a twelve-year (?) period that had at its foundation that mindset I described in this diary quote, not as a permanent state of course, but it was a pretty dominant underlying mindset. I thought I was basically coasting in a neutral post-Siddha Yoga world doing what had to be done to survive and prosper and because of that, I didn't apply any higher spiritual interpretation to some parts of my life that seemed to be unravelling. There were aspects where the normal demands of life were impacting negatively in areas like relationships, finances and a job I hated, but behind these every day stresses, there was something more significant happening that wasn't directly related, which I will describe later in this chapter.

Even had I been more informed I doubt that what was underway would have been different as I don't believe there was any aspect of *me* that had control over the process then or now. As Bernadette writes:

I never chose my experiences as a child, never chose to go through either of the movements that have been discussed, and I know that no matter what the

circumstances of life, this movement would have gone its own way. Outside our choosing and doing them, all is being moved by an unknowable intelligence, moved in one sure direction, and changing as it goes, wherein the goal is nothing more than the movement itself. Thus, we move in and out of a variety of existences, different ways of knowing and being, always changing, always moving, and this movement is our delight, our revelation, and our very life.

I wouldn't describe much of this movement as 'a delight' but whatever the emotion it seemed that by Stage Two I was unknowingly on a journey to discover 'how deep the rabbit hole goes'. I never got the opportunity to change my mind, to take a red pill antidote and have things return to the way they were, unlike Cypher, the Judas character in The Matrix, who did negotiate a return ticket:

Cypher: You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix (mind) is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realise? Ignorance is bliss.

But going back to an *ignorance is bliss* reality doesn't seem to be an option outside the movies and the fact of the matter is that, as I wasn't aware that I was engaged in a red pill rabbit hole adventure, it is a waste of time imagining what might have been.

I touched on the starting point for Stage Two in the previous chapter where knowingly, or more likely unknowingly, we reach the limit of the search for an inner centre using whatever discipline we have chosen (Bernadette calls this core a *state of oneness* or *divine centre*) at which time the focus turns outward to slowly redefine the way we perceive ourselves and our reality. Bernadette describes this scenario below in a response to a written question and I thought it was worth adding.

Please note: I find that Bernadette can be a bit heavy duty in the way she writes. Do what I do and just focus on those aspects that make sense and don't get lost in the totality or negate the fundamental message, which is spot on:

We can only see a path in retrospect. Once we come to the state of oneness, we can go no further with the inward journey. The divine centre is the innermost 'point', beyond which we cannot go at this time. Having reached this point, the movement of our journey turns around and begins to move outward – the centre is expanding outward. To see how this works, imagine self, or consciousness, as a circular piece of paper. The initial centre is the ego, the particular energy we call 'will' or volitional faculty, which can either be turned outward, toward itself or inward, toward the divine ground, which underlies the centre of the paper. When, from our side of consciousness, we can do no more to reach this ground, the divine takes the initiative and breaks through the centre, shattering the ego like an arrow shot through the centre of being. The result is a dark hole in ourselves

and the feeling of terrible void and emptiness. This breakthrough demands a restructuring or change of consciousness, and this change is the true nature of the transforming process. Although this transformation culminates in true human maturity, it is not man's final state. The whole purpose of oneness is to move us on to a final state.....

.....The path from oneness to no-oneness is an egoless one and is therefore devoid of ego-satisfaction. Despite the unchanging centre of peace and joy, the events of life may not be peaceful or joyful at all. With no ego-gratification at the centre and no divine joy on the surface, this part of the journey is not easy. Heroic acts of selflessness are required to come to the end of self, acts comparable to cutting ever-larger holes in the paper – acts, that is, that bring no return to the self whatsoever.

Although this analogy is not an easy one to grasp, I can relate to it because in a broad sense it describes the process that happened to me in Stages One and Two. In Stage One I was searching for that inner *oneness* or *divine centre* and this was a conscious ego-driven process. By that I mean it was a goal similar to any external one based on the expectation of achieving a result that would satisfy that part of *me* that desired this outcome. 'I' wanted to reach a blissful state of realisation and 'I' expected to be fully aware when it happened so that 'I' could enjoy the results.

At some moment in Stage One, that inner journey reached the *innermost point* and turned outward progressing to Stage Two. I am not sure about the analogy of the ego being *shattered*, which gives the impression of a quick process while I found the death of ego happened and continues to happen over an extended period of time. Whatever the time frame, something was going on in my world that matches Bernadette's because she describes the resulting *dark hole in ourselves and the feeling of terrible void and emptiness* which is the same as my 2001 diary entry about a place of *loneliness and emptiness*.

If you are looking for good feelings in Stage Two (or beyond) think again *the events of life may not be peaceful or joyful at all*. With the breaking down of *self*, a disconnection with everything else seems to occur over time. In my case, I found that the main challenge at this point of the journey was not the actual disconnection itself but the memory of what connection felt like! The mind package is in full defensive mode. Negative *thoughts* rule because the *memory* of a previously connected life creates an *emotional* reaction triggering feelings of isolation and loss. We miss what we *remember* we previously had in our lives.

There is totally a logical reason for this very discomfoting progression. What we are going through is the gradual destruction of the basis of who we *think* we are, that ego we unconsciously adopted so early in life that we've always treasured, nurtured and protected. By normal standards this is a totally illogical process and the ego-*self* battles to preserve its existence as if its life depended on the outcome..... which of course it does.

The outcome of this transformative stage is not that we reconnect at some higher level and everything returns to how it was but at an elevated state incorporating more bliss, joy and happiness. Rather it is that the disconnect becomes more intense as the influence of the *self* – the *mind*, to sustain the illusion of the person you *think* you are diminishes because memory and emotions increasingly lose their energy to shape your reality. Take away the memory of how things were, that connectedness and the emotions cannot kick in to energise thoughts to generate feelings of isolation and loss. In this way, we start to adapt to a new *no-self* way of viewing the world, which I will cover in Stage Three.

If like me, you are an unknowing participant in this internal war then it can feel like being a permanent casualty in a world that is in upheaval for reasons beyond our comprehension. What I hadn't realised was that at some point I had signed up to a process that would absolutely change my reality, including the connection between *myself* and the world I thought existed around me.

Having written the previous sentence some time ago I look back on it now and smile because it is such a cliché for the way we think things work. We believe we have a measure of control over the unfolding of our lives. On that basis, I should have been aware of and have given *permission* for such a radical change in my life because.....well it's MY life! How could this happen to *me* without *my* consent and where do I lodge a complaint?

Looking back on thirty-eight years wandering this path mostly without a guidebook, I now realise just how steadily the underlying changes were being rolled out, particularly in Stage Two, altering me on deeper levels while on the surface I struggled with losing what I considered to be the norms of life. Life was slowly disengaging with me and I had no idea why. Bernadette was more informed than I was but even she also got caught in a process where the perception is that you are losing everything and gaining nothing.....

..... 'the falling away of the self and a coming upon of 'that' which remains when it is gone' because it (we) never experiences the inflow of new life as the old life flows out. For me, this was the most bewildering aspect of the journey. I had fully expected that as the self disappeared and was emptied, some form of divine life would appear and fill in the emptiness.

This gradual disengagement was the aspect that had the greatest impact on me and the struggle I had with a loss of connection to the activities and people around me and the emotions that should have been happening when living a *normal* life. I think this disconnection was happening early in Stage Two (I have almost no recollection of this period) but either it became more intense later or I became more aware and worried about it as time passed. This aspect lasted for many years right up to more recent times, even into the period after I moved to Thailand in 2013 when I noted in my diary:

I had a shaky time last night. It comes and goes. Better today. I sometimes get overwhelmed by a lack of emotional attachment to life. Emotions give body and life to thoughts that help drive us in certain directions or to take certain actions. Take that away and you have the thoughts without the drive. Making decisions when two or more options have equal emotional weighting makes it all a fairly "dry" exercise and sometimes hard to finalise anything. I mostly cope but envisaging a life that seems to comprise of filling in time sometimes scares the hell out of me.

Re-reading this diary entry is interesting because it shows that even towards the end of Stage Two, which was when these words were written, I still had the built-in assumption that we need emotions to give us energy, direction and make us whole. Having moved to a reality where emotions, memories and thoughts play no strong defining role in my life I can assure you that this assumption is incorrect but more on that soon.

I recently came across another burst of writing I did related to the same subject that has some relevance so I will share it. I think these words were the draft of an email to my brother, which I never sent, in reply to a question he had about my pre-retirement decision-making process. It is interesting to read some six years later that back then I was already contemplating the mind components I emphasise so much in this document. Reading it today I now know my words describe a dying *self* from Stage Two, on the cusp of the Transition to Stage Three:

Your question about boredom is a very much an issue with me and one that is giving me some grief. I have periods here (Thailand) where I would describe myself as being bored. Life on a permanent holiday sounds good but suddenly the days are longer than we experience in our 'normal' lives. We both know that this can be overcome by creating activities and planning for the future to distract and fill in the time between waking and sleeping, thereby giving focus and direction to life and covering the emptiness underneath.

*The maintenance of life as we perceive it seems to require three interlinked sequences one following from the other being **thought** - a picture of the future, the investment of **energy** to developing that thought concept, a physical energy to bring the thought into physical reality, the ability to recognise the resulting creation and an **emotional** attachment to that form.*

I have some problems in developing a strategy along these lines. As we discussed on the beach in Phuket, I have almost totally lost the ability to create a thought that comes with the attached energy and activity to make it real. Even if that could be done the outcome is observed from an emotional distance, which is perhaps partly the problem. No reward leads to no incentive for the creative force

to work. My life largely involves trying not to sink into inertia but to fill in the blankness of each day's page.

The underlying void, which previously had been covered over with projects has been brought into the forefront as a result of pulling back from a life that fills in time with activities.

My emotional connection with the world continues to shrink and has become particularly evident here with less formal activity to fill in time. Decisions often involve following desires, pictures in mind of outcomes that result in meaning, following one's 'heart' etc. I can't connect with any of that. Staying in Thailand doesn't give me a rush of excitement and vision of possibility on which I would then be drawn to make my decision. Returning to Australia is an equally blank emotional canvas.

A friend told me to make a list of pros and cons to help with making a decision. It becomes a short list if emotion doesn't play a part. Another person said to look for my inspiration. I don't have any idea of what that might be. When it comes down to it my life is filling in time between waking and sleeping. That obviously applies to us all but with me, there isn't much in the way of a connection to what I'm doing or feeling on the way through.

My life during the Balala stage (this relates to my former home in Canberra) was formal work and projects. Projects filled in my spare time. Maybe my only option is to look for the best place where I can add projects to my life? Build a house here? Can't afford to do that in Australia. Anyway. Maybe the financial outcome scares me enough to make me default return to Australia.

The other thing I noticed in this latter period of Stage Two was that I also felt that my memory was becoming patchier in recalling or reliving past events. Close friends and both my partners during this time will attest to this phenomenon! The past seemed to fade increasingly quickly as time progressed and new additions to memory had no life force or energy attached to them. Almost as soon as an event moved out of the present moment, I found that there was no *me* to connect with that memory. I could vaguely recall the images of a past event but was unable to attach a *real* person as the observer of those images. Bernadette describes the same:

I noticed how flat and lifeless it (memory) was – like colourless slides on an antique film. It was dead. Not only was the distant past empty, but also the past of the previous minutes. BR

My mother also experienced this when she wrote:

All the external pictures of my world seemed to appear momentarily only, and then return to the Emptiness. Memories are lifeless, like the negatives of a black and white film, and the constant pendulum of the mind slows down, the swing from past to future decreases - strange really.

As a result of these two conditions, a feeling of disconnection from life and an increasing detachment from memories, which fuels so much of who we think we are in the present moment, I felt more and more isolated. In a simple illustration of how life looked for me then I can remember celebratory events such as the Melbourne Cup (a huge Australian horse race for non-Aussies reading), other sporting occasions or live concerts. I would observe the people surrounding me and they all seemed to be fully engaged, bursting with excitement, energy, passion, everything that you'd expect as a response to activities such as these. I looked at the same scene and felt absolutely nothing. Events were just a play of shapes and colours and because I had no emotional reaction to them, they seemed totally lifeless, flat and pointless.

My relationships also suffered as they became dry and brittle because of my inability to find any emotional energy to express. My partners remarked on my detachment and lack of passion and understandably this increasingly became a problem leading in part to the breakdown of two marriages.

At some point in Stage Two, I came to quite logically believe that I was suffering from depression again, not the black overwhelming despair of earlier years but something equally intrusive on the quality of life and ability to cope day to day. My doctors agreed and as a result, I spent years on antidepressant medication, which took the edge off the effects but didn't seem to make any improvement to the underlying problem. My analogy of this state, as I told the psychologists I was referred to, was that I felt there was a sheet of glass between me and the rest of the world. It was as if I could still observe everything out there but had no way to touch, feel or be engaged with what my eyes were seeing. I was an outsider with no ability to emotionally participate or feel involved with the flow of life. It was an intensely frustrating period and one I never adjusted to.

There were other side-effects to this gradual loss of connection. I believe I reacted to an ever-increasing loss of sense of identity and inability to touch the reality I sought by trying to creating compensating emotional 'hits in my life. This I achieved by spending money and undertaking Do It Yourself (DIY) projects, the latter usually based around my house and garden. Once again Bernadette hints at a similar band-aid solution when she writes:

There's nothing blissful about sheer nothingness.....so what it boils down to is the fact that the only thing we can trust in life is...well, money. We blame greed on the self, but it may not work that way at all; materialism may not stem from the self but from the nothingness that lies beyond the self.

These projects gave me a way of making something appear in my life and this act of creation, of bringing something *real* into my world gave me a brief sense of achievement. By playing this game I had moments where I felt I was back and living life as it was supposed to be or at least by focussing on and being distracted by something other than the emptiness I found that a period of relief was generated.

Spending money was also a way of connection, not just through these projects, but in the endless desire for collecting things, which in retrospect, I now realise I mostly never needed. Purchasing something gave me a sense of control, an event of personal creation, of being God in a small way. An object created in the mind, was followed by the building of desire, the mental permutations of whether one should or shouldn't go ahead, the review of finances (or not), imagining what it would feel like once the goal was achieved and then the excitement leading up to the actual arrival of the item. From pure thought to the physical reality this is truly a cycle of pure creation resulting in a rollercoaster of emotions along the way that kept me feeling more human and alive, even if only briefly.

The downside obviously is that having achieved the object that has taken up so much of one's energy and focus, the process is finished and another has to be formed to repeat the emotional ride yet again.

Looking back on Stage Two I spent much of it trapped in this cycle of endless house and garden projects, shopping online and large credit card bills. The final and probably most impressive representation of this obsessive behaviour was a large extension to my house in Canberra that I built on weekends and holidays and which I quite rightly named The Folly. In retrospect, I was blessed to have it because my obsession with its creation provided a welcome distraction from an ever-increasing loss of connection to the person I thought was me. The Folly kept me grounded enough to largely complete Stage Two and set me on the path to the next. However, my second marriage fell apart at the end of this time, so there was a price to pay.

If anyone reading these words is nodding in recognition to the last few paragraphs you **might** just be a DIY obsessed, hardworking spendthrift ...or just maybe you are trying to compensate for a sense of disassociation and loss of a clearly identifiable *self* and are attempting to break through that pane of glass you feel is separating you from the rest of the world. Have you unknowingly taken a red pill at some point in your life, or maybe knowingly taken it without reading the small print? Are you further down the rabbit hole than you thought? It's worth asking the question.

The only amusing recollection I have of this later period (in retrospect as always) was when, for some unknown reason, I asked my doctor if he felt that my previously intense involvement with meditation might have something to do with my current disconnected and depressed situation. Why I raised this with a doctor is beyond me as they are usually very grounded and more focused on pharmaceutical solutions than answering questions on a metaphysical level! Anyway, I think the outcome of my question was that he either increased my medication or referred me to another psychologist! The serious side of this scenario is that maybe I was closer to the truth than I knew at the time.

So, what is actually happening in Stage Two, if you believe that some of what I was experiencing was other than just depression and dissociation? I have touched on my answer to this question before but it is worth repeating.

The 'secret' agenda underlying the journey to Truth is that it involves the total destruction of the whole illusionary structure that makes us who we think we are. I do not believe that the Truth can be achieved in duality based on a *self* – an ego personality. A *mind*-based personality (subject) won't reach a point where the Truth can either be observed or revealed as an inner emotional experience. If you do have a blissful encounter with an altered state of reality that you'd like to call *enlightenment* or any other label, then I believe that unfortunately you still have some way to go. The problem is that in order to experience a heavenly transformation there still has to be a separate someone to register that emotion. That someone is created by the *mind* (memories, emotions and thoughts, as I endlessly repeat) and while they exist you will continue to experience a constant swing between all the emotions. You will only gain peace once the *self*-created by these influences is destroyed.

I say 'secret' agenda because either people never experience this process to the full in order to write/talk about it or they focus on more positive outcomes such as the whole bliss filled nirvana mythology and ignore what happens beyond that stage. I can understand why this might be because this is such a difficult destination to sell.

Basing a weekend retreat or a self-realisation book, which had as its basis Stage Two is not going to be commercially successful so you won't come across it being promoted too often! Would you sign up for the outcome I describe in this chapter? I wouldn't! In defence of some of the reputable teachers out there, encouraging people onto a self-development path (a red pill moment) in whatever form that takes is vital so that others have the opportunity to grow beyond their current limitations. I am not downplaying their mission.

I was listening to a YouTube presentation by Tolle where he talks, very accurately, about his experience of sitting on a park bench and observing reality in a state of what he calls an *alert stillness* and I have already written that I really like this as a description of Stage Three. The problem is that we can sometimes engage with a moment of observing life without *mind* processing for a brief period of time. This is Stage One training stuff in whatever form the discipline chosen allows for this outcome. But what then happens is that, because the *self* is so ingrained by habit as central to everything about us, at some point the mind regains control and memories, emotions and thoughts pour back and you return to being *you* again.

The objective of this part of the journey is to have this *alert stillness* become a permanent *now* experience and the **only** way for that to happen is the 'secret' part, which requires the destruction of the *self*, the person you think you are, not just a disconnect while you meditate (or whatever) but in every moment of your waking life. That's the hard part to sell and the hard part to achieve. With no thoughts, memories or other distractions to take you out of the *now* moment, you lose all the labels you attach to yourself and life becomes the Stage Three I write about, which is observation without identity or analysis.

When I write about a permanent *now* experience, we only live in the now moment of course, but often don't recognise that fact. The swings of attention we have between past and future is purely an illusion distracting us from the reality in front of us each moment. When alert stillness becomes permanent, the difference is that we no longer have these distractive swings of delusion because the mind package is no longer in control. Each moment is lived in alert stillness unless a reaction is required and I will cover this in detail soon. I have also written a chapter called *Time*, which expands on this concept.

Because of the non-disclosed nature of the changes required to make real progress I suspect that the majority of people are like me in that they find themselves unknowingly experiencing transformation. Without a doubt, this is a massive and mysterious upheaval to anyone's reality and it is why this part of the journey needs so much time (20 years in Bernadette's case and mine). If the process happens too quickly without the proper grounding then the risk is you will label this loss of identity as a mental dysfunction, which is probably not the state you were hoping to achieve!

To fall into a *no-self* experience, even in a diluted form, in the early part of the journey may not be the positive enlightening experience you might think. Would you want to wake up without any clear memories or the emotions attached to them, a loss of body consciousness and no relationship with the person attached to your name or the face in the mirror? A list like that takes acclimatisation! While some like Tolle and Byron Katie have made the transition in a brief period of time this is an unusual occurrence for good reason. In my opinion, the only way it can be achieved quickly is if it is a 100% switch with no comparative memories for how life used to be. Slow and steady is the most likely option you will experience to allow you to acclimatise to a totally new way of reality.

I will finish this chapter by reminding you of what I wrote in my introduction about the various reasons I had for writing this paper and maybe you recall number four being:

Fourthly and maybe most importantly, there are aspects of the transformation required to move through the stages I describe that can be termed either spiritual progress or mental breakdown..... It is my belief that there are many people in similar circumstances who are being treated professionally for psychotic problems who are in fact purely moving into a new phase of life as intended.

So, for any psychologists reading this, please keep an open mind about this subject beyond the standard textbooks. Is it possible a few of the people you counsel professionally who could be displaying some of the characteristics I have described in this chapter and might be in a positive (eventually) transformative state and not just reacting solely to life's stressors. It would be fascinating to know how many people are being treated for the most obvious while behind the scenes a process of *self*-destruction was underway as it was for me.

Looking back on this very challenging time in my life I now believe that there was a hidden master plan and that my experience of Stage Three brought some clarity as to what that might be and why a

process of disengagement was required. However in-between Stages Two and Three was a little sub-stage that I will describe next.

The Transition

Chapter Seven:

I was going to tack this topic onto the end of the Stage Two chapter, but it deserves its own heading as this is a stand-alone movement on the journey.

I call the migration from Stage Two into a permanent Stage Three *Transition* because that's exactly what's happening. As always, I can write with the authority of a retrospective view of what was happening but at the time (2013 – 2015) this period was also a challenge for me and not understood at all. It's not an encouraging read so far, is it? Amy found it equally challenging:

Eventually as the months passed I found that the changes to the whole psyche, the inner silencing of thought patterns, the loss of the felt presence of the Guru (teacher), and the difficulty in relating to the inner emptiness must have subconsciously produced a state of anxiety which was diagnosed by the doctor as an anxiety complex. I found it very difficult to accept that the physical illness I now experienced was due to my mind.

Night-time was quite nightmarish and no amount of mantra repetition and prayers had any effect, and during the day my body just collapsed. If anything could reveal the power of the mind this episode of my life surely did. It took several months before slowly life returned to normal and routine was again established.

I will try a day/night analogy here for the Transition and see how that looks. Let's say the end period of Stage Two I have described is like twilight. The reality, which used to be clear and vivid in the full sunlight of the *self*, starts to become blurry and dim as twilight envelopes our world. Our connection with perceived reality becomes weakened (the pane of glass in my case) because we can no longer clearly see or touch it. At the time my main fear was that this twilight would deepen and I'd eventually end up in the *dark* with no identity to hold on to, which is exactly what happened. This period ended as the Stage Three no-*self* reality I write about, although I didn't know it at the time.

What I discovered during the Transition is that it wasn't the dark I feared so much as losing the light! There was a period where I moved between the twilight and the darkness and I found that the latter was so much harder to accept because I still had a memory of what life was like with sunlight. The difference between someone born blind and someone who loses their sight later is that one has no sense of what they are missing, while the other person does through memories of an alternative.

The constant switch between twilight and darkness gave me a point of comparison and I realised I didn't want to lose the light, even in a diluted form. The concept of being in total darkness, of being

without a *self*, resulted in moments of overwhelming fear and even anger at a loss of a *me* that I never asked for. Welcome to the Transition.

Bernadette writes of fear along the same lines, although I am not sure if this relates directly to what I call the Transition, or to another stage beyond Stage Three, that I write about in my chapter called *Where to Next?*

It was a time of utter terror as the self fell away: 'Now I cannot convey what it is like to stare at some invisible horror when you don't know what it is. Just knowing what it is maybe all the defence you need; but when you've gone through your list of name-calling and it does no good, you just have to resign yourself to not knowing and face it anyway. This thing I had to stare down was simply a composite of every connotation we have of 'terror,' 'dread,' 'fear,' 'insanity,' and things of this order.

I don't think I need to elaborate much on my analogy. Substitute *self* for *twilight* and *no-self* for *darkness* and you've got the idea.

My transition took place towards what ended up being the winding-up of my life in Australia and the first couple of years of being settled as a resident of Thailand. The final months of my time in Australia were so stressful that it is hard to distinguish everyday uncertainties with anything deeper. My memories of that time are almost gone so I will move onto a period I do vaguely recall.

I began my Thai life in the beachside destination of Phuket, where I rented a pool villa to treat myself for the challenging achievement of actually getting there. I had seven months left of a twelve-month leave-without-pay break from my government job before returning to work in Canberra (I ended up taking early retirement and settling in Thailand). I had separated from my wife, sold my house and all options were on the table in a positive way.

Phuket is not the sort of place I'd want to live permanently, but it is a fun environment to spend an extended holiday and not stressful in any way, so I was amazed when I was hit by regular panic attacks. During these periods I lost touch with myself and everything around me; very similar to that experience I had thirty years ago and described earlier. It was an overwhelming isolation of great intensity and really worrying. Remember that at the time I had NO idea about most of what I write about here and so I associated these episodes on the big changes happening in my life and the uncertainties of the future. Having said that I was still puzzled because my new life was very positive and enjoyable, in such contrast to what I had been through, so I didn't understand why I should be having intense panicky moments over and above the general disconnection I have written about in Stage Two.

I experienced several of these and for the first time in my life (I had been off all anti-depressant medication for six months) I went out and bought some Valium as an experiment to try and take the edge off the panic, which as a non-pill popper is an indication of how distressing these events were. In Thailand, no prescription is required for many medications that would require a doctor's

authorisation elsewhere. Therefore, when I was given some little blue pills in a small plastic bag, I hoped the pharmacist understood what I wanted and had given me Valium and not Viagra :-)

After six weeks in Phuket, I moved to a beautiful rental property on five acres just outside Chiang Rai in the far north of Thailand, where I lived for three months. A further twelve months in Chiang Mai completed my nomadic existence before I settled permanently in the northeast of the country with my new wife, which is where I have been based for over four years. One of the consistent themes running through every one of these locations were the panic attacks, not related to difficulties with my new life but because I kept slipping into a lost space, a void where 'I' disappeared. I mostly stayed off Valium (I still have a few pills left from Phuket I keep as a memento!) and as these events tended to happen at night (not always) my defence was to get up and DO something to distract myself and try and reconnect.

Writing about these panics now makes it all seem a bit ho-hum but it wasn't at the time. They weren't an everyday occurrence but the attacks were very unpleasant and the concern that one of them would totally overwhelm my reality was at the back of my mind especially at night. Do you remember that list of attributes I gave in the last chapter for loss of self, which read *.....without memories, the emotions attached to them, separate body consciousness and no relationship with the person attached to your name or in the mirror?* Try that one at midnight and you might get a feeling for how frightening these events were.

I also wrote, *It isn't the dark you fear it is the loss of light*. Funnily, (I can say that now) the cure for these events wasn't extra illumination but more darkness! Over time I became more and more based in a no-self reality and memories of what a light-filled world looked like faded, which made the darkness an increasingly ordinary experience. With an increasing dilution of the *mind's* ability to create an individual *self* a corresponding inability to compare one with the other happened. A *now* reality without *self*-awareness became dominant and fear dissipated as a result. My panic attacks stopped a couple of years ago.

In the next chapter *Stage Three – Living with No-Self* I share why this *darkness* needs to become permanent as an important staging post on this odd journey to Truth.

Stage Three – Living with No-Self

Chapter Eight:

Just to clarify my position with respect to labels. Firstly, I live a life that still involves an element of *self* so although I use the ‘*no-self*’ expression in this chapter it is only reflective of the greatly reduced influence of the *self* when compared to before and it isn’t intended to give you the impression that I have reached a final *no-self* destination if indeed that is a staging post on this journey. I nearly called this chapter *Living with Less-Self* but having qualified this aspect at the beginning I think we are good to go.

I say that I haven’t reached any final destination, because I believe that after what I call Stage Two and The Transition there are two further steps to the final destruction of the self in all its forms, which reveals the Truth. The first of these I know something about and it is a greatly reduced influence of the *mind* package on life, which is dramatically transforming but not the end game. This is where I currently reside.

There is maybe one more interim stage and this is the process to reach a complete loss of *self*-identity, which then maybe eventually reveals the final destination - realising or becoming the Truth. I won’t go into more detail here because since writing these words I have found some references Bernadette makes to the stages beyond the *no-self*, and I have some thoughts of my own and I will write about these in a separate chapter called *Where to Next*.

In her book *Journey to Truth*, my mother Amy wrote:

I thought this morning that it is just as well that we have little idea of what we are asking when we start the search for Truth because it is so tremendous, so unbelievable, and the changes that have to be undergone on all levels take so much living.

Bernadette Roberts also talks about the fundamental changes that occur:

I took for granted the self was the totality of being; body and soul, mind and feelings; a being centred on God (Truth), its power-axis and still-point.

Because this was the limit of my expectations (and experiences), I was all the more surprised and bewildered when I came upon a permanent state in which there was no self, not even a higher self, a true self or anything that could be called a self.

So, what does all this no-*self* stuff mean? Why would we want to have the *self*-dissolved (although this may not be a voluntary choice – it was a total surprise to me in the same way it was for Bernadette!) and what would life look like if it that happened? This poem extracted from Amy's book quoting a Buddhist master called Shabkar writing about the no-*self* state provides a useful insight:

When one looks at one's own mind (looking for a 'me' after the loss of self-identification – Tony) - the root of all phenomena - there is nothing but vivid emptiness, nothing concrete there to be taken as real.

It is present as transparent, utter openness, without outside, without inside - an all pervasiveness without boundary and without direction.

The wide-open expanse of the view, the true condition of the mind, is like the sky, like space; without a centre, without an edge, without a goal.

By leaving whatever I experience relaxed in ease, just as it is, I have arrived at the vast plain that is the absolute expanse.

Dissolving into the expanse of emptiness that has no limits and no boundary, everything I see, everything I hear, my own mind, and the sky all merge.

Not once has the notion arisen of these being separate and distinct.

In the absolute expanse of awareness all things are blended into that single taste - but, relatively, each and every phenomenon is distinct, clearly seen.

If I listed all the attributes that are now incorporated into my Stage Three, they would read as a weird bunch of changes, some of which I wouldn't have selected to put on my life's to-do list. They include:

- The loss of connection with my conscious historical memory and imagined future;
- A silent mind (not the type of silence you might think. I explain this later);
- Dissolving of the *mind* created *self*-identity (the Tony Eastmead package), that gave me such a strong feeling of duality and separateness while supporting the rollercoaster of emotional desires and reactions to events;
- A loss of identification with an individual physical body;
- The loss of emotional responses based solely on thought-based memory and reactive conditioning, and on the plus side:
- The dominance of a state of *alert stillness* – living in the *now*.

To understand what a huge transformation this list represents it mostly incorporates all the characteristics that caused the loss of connection and sense of terror I described happening thirty years ago and the more recent panic attacks in Thailand. Recalling that reaction to my perceived reality at the time is a recognition of the amazing changes that have occurred since, as these aspects are now permanently part of the reality I live. I no longer experience transitional swings between twilight and darkness, and there has been no return to how things were in the Transition, Stage Two or before – not even for a moment and even if I wanted to take that red pill antidote, I have no idea how that might be achieved. I couldn't even give you a clear vision of what my before looked or felt like the transformation has been so complete.

I saw myself as unwittingly trapped without a means of escape when I realised that once the self is gone, the resultant state is irreversible; the affective system could not be resurrected. BR

I have already explained why the anxiety attacks have dissipated using my light/darkness analogy and it is this outcome which makes life *on the other side* bearable and, as of this moment as I type this, perfectly normal. Once a separate *me* stopped being the core of who I thought I was then there just wasn't a sense of loss or fear because there is nothing left to lose and nothing left to fear.

As the distance between the two (the self and no-self experience) increases with the acclimating, accommodating process of settling down to a new way of life, the old life-with-self grows dim and fades out altogether. BR

Previously I would have thought that someone in such a state of *no-self* would be like a zombie or less a person and what would be the point of living a life like that? Wasn't the whole point of a *self*-development journey (if in fact, you did sign up for that) to make us more of everything or more of all the good stuff anyway, resulting in an expanded life; brighter, more joyous, happier, connected, successful and so on. In Tenzin Palmo's book *Cave in the Snow*, she reveals the basic simplicity behind all the complications incorporated into the various spiritual disciplines, the endless books, weekend courses and YouTube clips. Tenzin writes:

It's so simple we miss it. We think it has to be something bigger, more spectacular. What do people think spiritual development is? It is not lights and trumpets. It is very simple. It is right here and now. People have this idea that enlightenment and realisation is something in the distance - a very fantastic and magnificent happening that will transform everything once and for always. But it is not like that at all. It's something which is sometimes so simple you hardly see it. It's right here in front of us, so close we don't notice it. And it's something which can happen at any moment. And the moment we see it, there it is. It has

been there all the time, but we have had our inner eye closed. When the moments of awareness all link up - then we become a Buddha.

Because we live in a mind-based reality, we automatically think that to reach a big life-changing goal like the Truth it must involve a university degree approach with the endless study, daily attendance, intellectual understanding and clearly defined milestones achieved along the way. I don't downplay this path but as I have already written about in Stage One, at some point you will need to abandon the degree 'bus' journey' and let the 'divine' guide you to the simplicity beyond the mind and *self*, a far harder destination to achieve. As Krishnamurti says:

And I am afraid there is a great deal of misapprehension that we are trying to find a technique to truth - a technique, which means learning the method, practising a method, learning a certain form of technique that will help you or another to come upon this truth. We are not advocating, or saying, that there is any technique to truth. Please be very clear on this matter. Technique implies learning a method. I mean, to go to Mars, as they have done, which is a most extraordinary feat, you need a great deal of technological knowledge, a great deal of accumulated knowledge of the 'know-how'. But as truth is a pathless land - please bear this in mind - it is a pathless land, you can't lay down a line, a direction, a path to it and practise it, discipline yourself, learn a technique.

So please bear in mind that we are not giving or offering, or telling a technique, a method, a system. We are already so mechanically minded, our minds are already sufficiently mechanistic, and by practising a technique, a verbal repetition, silence, you know the whole business of all that all techniques will somehow loosen, or free the mind from all mechanistic activity. I am afraid it won't. What we are saying is, that you must have the interest, the drive, the intensity to find out - find out for yourself, not be told how to do it. Then what you discover is something yours, then you will be free from all gurus, from all techniques, from all authority. Please bear that in mind while we are having a dialogue about these matters.

Just as an aside, the fact that a joyous outcome the 'lights and trumpets' is nowhere to be seen in these final stages of this journey is one of the hardest lessons to absorb as it makes no sense when viewed through the glasses of our everyday expectations. Why would we undertake something without a positive emotional payback at the end - the fulfilment of that endless happiness objective we all crave? I will try to explain that puzzle later, based on my current understanding.

These days in Stage Three, I have acclimated to seeing the world through different eyes and having my old view replaced by an alternative that I had no idea even existed. As a way to start explaining this scenario I will use a quote from Bernadette:

But what sees this Oneness and knows what it sees? The eye that looks is not within, it is not of mind or body, it is not of the self.....

To show my quoting versatility I will also share this passage, which based on my actual experience nails Stage Three perfectly. Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche writes in his book Rainbow Painting:

While perceiving, Buddha nature is empty of a perceiver, while being empty, there is still experience. Search for the perceiver, there is no 'thing' to find. There is no barrier between the two. If it were one or the other there should either be a concrete perceiver who always remains, or an absolute void. Instead, and at the same time vivid perception takes place, that which perceives is totally empty.

Both of these quotes are a bit obscure unless you directly experience the state they describe but break them down and it makes more sense. Their first shared proposition is of an observer without *self*-attributes – Bernadette writes: *the eye that looks is not within* and Tulku: *that which perceives is totally empty*. Secondly, even though the perceiver (subject) is neutral, observation is still happening, the world doesn't just slip into a void. Bernadette writes: *what sees this Oneness and knows what it sees?* and Tulku: *at the same time vivid perception takes place*. Remember we are talking Stage Three reality here (an interim stop-over at Dubai Airport!), not the final destination, which I predict moves beyond this stage. As long as the question can still be asked *what sees this Oneness*, which is an implied duality, the final destination has not been realised, which I believe is a life totally beyond the subject/object relationship even in a neutral observational role.

I was reading that the above quotation from Bernadette some time ago, whilst at my wife's family farm in Thailand. It was a hot day so I had a fan blowing on me and it made me examine how I reacted to that physical sensation and how that related to the question *what sees this Oneness and knows what it sees*. If I focussed on the *now* moment, I was aware of air movement but I was unable to define a boundary between my skin and everything else. Although I obviously still operate within a body, which experiences all the physical sensations as before, I have very little connection with that entity as an identifiable separate *me*.

To take this proposition further and examine the *what sees* aspect rather than the physical, when I look at myself in a mirror, I cannot attach a *Tony* personality to the image I see. The face in the mirror and the physical *me* have no identity that I can identify as real. It is as if both sides are reflections and therefore equally without definable substance. Before I had this Stage Three transformation, looking at a mirror image wouldn't change my connection to the real *me*, the *Tony* person on *my* side of the mirror. The reflection was observed as literally a mirror image, the unreal *me*. I knew it was *me* on *my* side because I felt separate from the reflected image. That separateness was a certainty created and supported by my *self*-identity, the *Tony Eastmead me* created by my mind. Relating this loss of separate identity to Tulku's earlier quote, a no-*self* reality at this point of the journey still recognises what is observed but *that which perceives is totally empty*.

I have already stated that I believe the no-*self* I experience is only an interim stage and debating its characteristics is pretty pointless in the bigger picture, but this chapter in the book would be short if I didn't so I will expand on this concept!

Although there is a lack of a definable *self*-centre the world is still observed from a fixed point of view - my eyes. I find that there is still a centre-point around which the backdrop of the world reveals itself but I believe this too will dissolve over time (discussed in the *Where to Next* chapter). However, what my eyes see doesn't necessarily generate all the analytical stuff that it would have before, which is a huge change and a positive one when I reflect on it.

To try and explain this can we try a small experiment, which will illustrate the way I now see the world? Close your eyes; well, please read this paragraph first and then close your eyes! Not surprisingly the internal view is one of uniform darkness. Because there is nothing that stands out individually from the void the internal eye remains unfocused and the total expanse of nothingness in a widescreen view. It doesn't fix itself on one part of that blackness (the mind's automatic search for an object) because there's nothing identifiable standing out from everything else in view. Now, look at how the *mind* processes this neutral state. Leaving aside its ability to create distractions in any circumstance, in this closed-eye scenario with no separate object to kick-start a corresponding thought, memory or emotion the *mind* is more likely to quieten or rest in stillness rather than start any analytical process. You can open your eyes now!

This is what meditation sessions used to look like for me. In my early Siddha Yoga days, the internal nothingness would most likely cause my mind to move into imagination mode creating thoughts based on memories or future projections to fill the boredom of blankness, the sort of 'what will I have for dinner?' interruptions). Over time I became more proficient at meditation but the mind was still a powerful force to override the internal stillness, as any of you who have tried meditation will attest to.

One of the most unusual changes that has happened in my no-*self* stage is that these days I experience **exactly** the same meditative stillness when I look at the world with open eyes as I do with my eyes closed, except it's more colourful. In exactly the same way as viewing the internal uniform blackness, when I observe the external world nothing stands out as an object that requires automatic analysing.

..... putting to a blessed, irrevocable end to the mind's automatic search for an object. Thereafter the mind never made the slightest movement to 'look', and in this way learned to live in the now-moment. BR

I can still see individual objects but they are like the pieces of a completed jigsaw puzzle. Each piece still retains its unique shape and attributes but once it is interlocked into the overall scene it loses its individuality and there is no analysis required by the observer to determine its potential location or relevance within the puzzle. I now observe life with every jigsaw piece in place and there is no need for the intrusion of any mental activity. Before I came across this no-*self* phenomenon I would be like

the person who is still working on the puzzle, analysing each piece individually for its shape, and what it represented so that I could place it within the larger picture. I no longer sit in formal meditation sessions because I can realise the same state eyes open and even when I am not aware of neutrally observing, this seems mostly be my default outlook on the world.

I nowadays find that even if I do focus on a single object the associated memories or emotions that might be attached to it, in what would have been a normal *mind* assessment process, no longer happens. I see a red rose as a red rose but its name, shape, colour or any other attribute is not activated as an automatic thought bubble, as it would previously. Because the *self* is no longer involved, objects don't require the expenditure of energy to analyse or judge, they are purely a play of shapes, colours and movement. In fact, if I focus on something and try to force it to become separate from its surroundings this only intensifies the experience of *that which perceives is totally empty*, the internal silence strengthens and this results in the pure observational state becoming even stronger. Bernadette writes:

Gradually I notice a shift in this seeing. Where at first it had been very nebulous and general, I soon noticed that when I focused in on a flower, an animal, another person, or any particular object, slowly the particularity would recede into a nebulous Oneness, so that the object's distinctness was lost to my mind. Visually, of course, nothing changed; the change was merely in the type of perception itself.

..... there is no longer the perceptual ability to focus on the particular, or individual because the state of consciousness is such that whatever is becomes the only reality seen everywhere. It's almost like looking at the world through a veil so that objects are no longer clearly defined.

It is impossible to see the self, to remember the self, or to be self-conscious, the mind was restricted to the present moment. The more it tried to reflect back on itself, the more overpowering the silence.

Referring to the zombie outcome I wrote about earlier, you will be pleased to hear that this Hollywood scenario doesn't apply to an altered no-*self* view of the world. This state of observation without analysis becomes the default reality of living in the *now* but it doesn't remove one's ability to function normally. I don't look at the red rose and then find I am unable to identify what it is – the dementia factor. When an input or a reaction is required the normal responses kick in but they do so totally in the moment and focus on that situation without any conscious reference to the past (historical memory). If you and I had a conversation about that rose I could tell you all of its characteristics, the fact that my wife planted it and she loves red roses, we have a lot more of them at home and that example was very beautiful. All of that response would be automatic without any internal structured thought, a mental reference to a time in the past or necessarily raise an attached

emotion – the latter being another of the big changes resulting from this state of *no-self* and a separate topic in the next chapter *Now Mindfulness*.

The odd thing is that even as we lose those aspects that we believe make us who we are, life continues much as before. If you met me you wouldn't find a personality that seemed disengaged or distant. From the outside, I don't think I haven't changed much at all. My wife Gaun doesn't find herself living with a totally different person to the one she met six years ago, or if she does, she seems to be quite happy with her new partner! This book has been written from this state of stillness, which demonstrates that on some level things are working as intended to maintain functionality. Rather, the change is my perception of the world and from my point of view, there's no one at home – ever.

I have mentioned this before but it is worth saying again because it is such a huge milestone in the journey. This experience of *no-self* is the first time on my journey spanning nearly forty years that something recognisably different has happened on a permanent basis and it is this permanency that makes this such a unique situation. Previous to this I dipped into altered realities through meditation, chanting or contemplation, but I always returned to life basically as it was. During meditation, I entered an inner world of silence and stillness, although often battling the intrusion of thoughts, and maybe touched on a sense of oneness to the exclusion of all around me. However, once I opened my eyes the world re-emerged and my mind returned to its normal role of analysing, assessing and reacting. Duality prevailed and my meditative state was quickly overwhelmed. When I compare that to now, and I have been settled into this *no-self* existence for over two years, there has not been one instance where I have moved out of that state. I find that the disconnect with a previous *self* gets deeper with passing time. To repeat Bernadette:

It is impossible to see the self, to remember the self, or to be self-conscious, the mind was restricted to the present moment. The more it tried to reflect back on itself, the more overpowering the silence.

In the next chapter, I try to give some life and reason to the way things are for me now to demonstrate how living in the *now* works in everyday life and why it might be beneficial.

Now Mindfulness

Chapter Nine:

Those who dance are considered mad by those who can't hear the music.

I do know that a lot of what I have written can easily be classified as weird, crazy or both and had I gone straight from a *self*-orientated normal existence to my current state and could compare the two as alternatives, I would find it weird too. However, for reasons I have discussed previously (the twilight/darkness - living in darkness analogy) I find nothing odd about my current situation. Indeed, the most challenging aspect of writing this book has been that unless I do some form of a before and after a reality check, I now find nothing at all unusual about the way I see and react to the world. It all seems so ordinary that recording it brings no desire to share what is actually an interestingly altered state of being, for those who are curious about such things.

What I experience is so simple and ordinary for me that it makes the endless written and verbal commentary on the subject seem distracting and over-thought.

Unfortunately, those who write about it (realisation of the truth) have a way of making it sound more extraordinary and blissful than it commonly is, and so false expectations are another impediment — we keep waiting and looking for an experience or state that never comes. If I had to put my finger on the primary obstacle, I would say it is having wrong views of the journey. BR

The other day I looked at videos available on YouTube published by Eckhardt Tolle and there seems to be a talk on just about every side-track that can be imagined such as - **What do I do when my Partner isn't Awake Spiritually**, **Guidance on Healing - Physical and Spiritual**, **How do I Manage my Loneliness**, **How do I overcome Self Criticism of My Appearance?**.....and on and on. I am not criticising Tolle. He is in the spiritual business and is only responding to the endless questions from those who follow him. Not surprisingly the mind would far prefer you to nurture its existence by cultivating a never-ending crop of questions rather than apply the weed killer of a *self*-less state and destroying it!

Stripped back to basics the answer to all of these questions is the same and I am sure Tolle takes people back to that truth within the scope of his teachings. The only solution to whatever the mind comes up with is to end the self, the ego, the *mind* itself, which traps us within this isolated entity.

February 2019 - A brief interruption to my previous words: What sprung out at me this morning was the phrase 'isolated entity' in the last paragraph. It came to me as I read it, that the thing we think

makes us more connected to the world is actually that which separates us from it! We believe, having no alternative point of reference, that our mind analysis and reaction, emotionally and physically to events that present to us, real or imaginary, allows us to engage with what surrounds us and become more complete. We become addicted to the emotional hits, we crave the roller coaster that takes on such a varied emotional ride and pulls us away from the core of who we are. We reach out and engage with all around us through thoughts, emotions and physical activities. We plan and create situations to give us another emotional high score. Happiness, pleasure and positive experience become the goal of our life. We sacrifice our time and energy to achieve what we believe will give us that.

Why is this so fundamental and important to an ego-based person? Because essentially without the mind created distractions a self-based personality is trapped within a physical and mental straight jacket that emphasises how separate we are from everything else. The ego by its very nature is a solitary entity. It creates the illusion of a physical and mental island around which the oceans of everything 'out there' surround us. Islands are nice for a holiday but the isolation of being a 'me' trapped within the boundaries of a body can become isolating, boring and claustrophobic. The mind come to the rescue and takes us from solitary awareness from our 'isolated entity' to virtual engagement. Instead of sitting on our island beach the mind allows us to jump into the water and immerse ourselves in what we think lies beyond the sand. To continue this watery analogy the journey to a no-self reality is like climate change in the South Pacific! The rising oceans eat away at the boundaries of our island of selfness until we transition from being surrounded by water to becoming one with the ocean itself. There can be no isolation in a state of non-duality.

[Back to my previous writing](#): We need to stop the mind-generated internal chatter, the emotional insecurities and the endless questions that arise as a result. Of the ego mind. My suggestion is that rather than spend time searching for answers to all the possible questions, the best solution is to tackle it in reverse and focus instead on *eliminating the need to ask the questions*! Don't put more buckets under the leaking roof – fix the roof instead thereby finding a permanent solution.

My personal belief is that realisation of Truth isn't the conclusion of an intellectual process, a degree to hang on the wall outcome of a number of intense academic semesters. It's not as though when you get an answer to the final question possible.....*boom*..... enlightenment, or that wasn't my experience anyway. I am not trying to be superior and dismissive by saying questions aren't important to the person raising them. Everything that happens on the journey is entirely appropriate to every individual, questions and all, and it is not for me or others to judge them. However, these are stages along the way to be worked through and then left behind. The joy of an intellectual discovery period could be a part of your journey as it was for Amy and Bernadette but not for me, so each to their own. Enjoy but don't get stuck there. At some stage, a point will be reached, realised or not, when you have to move beyond the mind stuff and start to actually become *less* in order to properly understand *more* by fully experiencing the changes required to complete the journey.

You are an ice cube melting into the ocean. The less you are the more you become. The form dissolves but the essence remains unchanged.

In my situation actually getting to this point in my life has been a difficult and time-consuming process, as you already know at this point in the book, but once there the simplicity of the outcome (at this stage with no speculation as to the future) makes me wonder what all the fuss was about.

I have found that the basis of what happens in Stage Three is that a disconnect happens to separate us from the mind generated distractions that take up so much of our energy and time. Without a controlling *self* trying to fill every moment of our life with thoughts, emotions and memories (creating the ocean that surrounds us) we are left with what **IS** in each moment and nothing more. We have no choice but to live in the *now* because we no longer have access to an alternative. It is like being a computer that has no memory storage and no keyboard or mouse. We can only be what is on the screen in this *now* moment because there is no access to the past and no hardware to allow us to fast-forward to the what-ifs of the future.

This is not just a technique applied to events on thoughtful demand or the learnt response based on a teaching method or self-discipline. Instead, this becomes a natural way of being in *every* moment without thought or a reversion to a mind- based *self*.

The most obvious question at this point would be, what is the benefit of this change, of *now* mindfulness, of living moment by moment, because this might sound like a very detached and clinical way to live. How can life be experienced fully without the emotional big dipper to give us highs and lows and power our actions to achieve more of one and less of the other? I will tackle this question but to some extent, I find that I discount my own answer. It's a bit like asking what the Dubai airport terminal is like if you are flying to London. Although it has some relevance when you have a stop-over there, in terms of the longer-term destination – who cares! I believe my Stage Three is a stop-over so getting caught up in an analysis of every detail and questioning the benefit or otherwise of it all is interesting but of little bearing to the essence of the journey.

Also, before I specifically answer that query, it came to me that asking this question is so typical of the old style thinking that I have covered endlessly in this book. So many of our thoughts are filtered through the 'what's in it for me?' mind process. We ask ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, how is doing this going to benefit me; how and when is the payback? It is only when we move out of a *self*-based reality, we can see how addicted we have become to gearing most of our actions towards obtaining these emotionally high outcomes. We want so much to maximise the good emotions and minimise the bad that this becomes central to everything we do often to our overall detriment.

Even when we turn to more esoteric concepts, such as finding a deeper meaning to life through spiritual/self-development practices, we tend to apply the normal expectations of outcome to that process. If we did everything asked of us, the meditation, the chanting, the mind-feeding courses and all the other aspects of whatever path we chose and we didn't get a reward in the form of a happiness boost at the end, wouldn't that be classified as a failure? Where is the 'what's in it for me' reward? In these terms, I would certainly treat my current view on life as a let-down. I haven't discovered a joyous nirvana nor do I live each moment in bliss but maybe that too is wrong thinking and not necessarily a failure of process.

Instead, what would happen if we turned this whole thing around? What if it is our expectations of life that is based on an incorrect premise and *normal* behaviour doesn't require a constant fix of

emotional hits that motivate so many of our actions, to make our lives seem worthwhile? What if the good feelings of happiness, joy, love, bliss and their flip side of hatred, fear, anger, worry was only applicable in a dysfunctional and illusional world that we automatically participate in and incorporate as central to a *self*-personality from early in life and now take totally for granted and never question?

What if *just* the act of being, of living in the moment without overwhelming emotional responses to every situation, without endlessly working to maximising the ups and minimising the downs, was in fact how life was meant to be? Wouldn't then the reality of my view on life *at this time* and those of Bernadette, Amy and countless others be normal and natural?

Over the next months, I realised other profound changes had occurred in the whole psyche. With the absence of the ego centre, the emotional system seemed also to have undergone a radical change. Where before, family crises would have evoked an emotional response, now it was as if the emotional self had also become voided, and events in daily life whether intellectually anticipated as pleasurable or not brought little response. I found this very difficult to adjust to. One was used to looking forward to a trip to Sydney, going to a Theatre, special 'treats', but now there was little surface emotion as the mind seemed to have lost much of its power of projection and stayed centred in the present moment. Amy

My proposition is that by living in the *now* moment without *self*/mind activity we *don't need* to analyse and react emotionally to every situation presented to us. We can still function and indeed do so far more efficiently and effortlessly when we disengage the mind's control over every aspect of our life and this allows us to react appropriately in the moment.

To support this statement let me give you three **very** simple examples of how a before no-*self* and after no-*self* response to the same situation might work.

I enjoy ice cream and used to eat it by the tubful when I lived in Australia. Imagine being me in the supermarket and passing the ice cream section - yum. I would identify the temptation and the ice cream would stand out from all else. My memories would then kick in to remind me how comforting and indulgent ice cream was. My imagination would have me eating ice cream and being satisfied, happy, rewarded – an array of subtle or not so subtle benefits! The desire to replicate that outcome would then make an appearance, followed by action to transfer a tub of ice cream from the freezer to my shopping trolley.

Back at home that evening, I would probably be tempted to eat straight from the tub, which would result in consuming too much, and then my healthy mind voice would make an appearance and thoughts about weight gain, 'bad for you' and lack of discipline might follow. Can you relate to this scenario? Use whatever product or situation that works for you - the cycle is much the same. Isn't it true that we constantly run to keep up with the never-ending demands of our thoughts, the

emotions they raise and the desires that result? How amazingly tiring this expenditure of energy is and often how fruitless.

Let's look at what happens to me now in the same situation for comparison purposes. Firstly, it is not a given that I will even notice ice cream in the supermarket because to become a recognised individual object something must invoke a mental /emotional response from the subject. We have discussed this before with the eyes closed/eyes open example. If something remains as just another shape within a widescreen view, a fitted piece of the jigsaw puzzle, then without any *self-generated* response to individualise it then it doesn't take on any characteristics that require a response.

Even if I do pick out ice cream as separate from everything else in my view it won't trigger any automatic memory recall or thought that pushes me to buy it. I may still purchase some ice cream but I make that choice at the moment without any conscious referral to an internal decision-making process. It either happens or it doesn't. I feel absolutely no difference in myself if I do or don't buy ice cream. There is no regret that I didn't and no pat on the back that I avoided temptation. As soon as I look away the moment fades because there is no need to file that whole scenario in my memory.

This example can be applied to most of my life. I can walk through a shopping mall and not experience one desire emotion to what I observe. I look and I can then choose to get involved or not and that decision isn't made by any conscious process that I am aware of and it has no impact on my state of being. Buying doesn't make me happy and not buying doesn't make me sad.

Although empirical (based on observation) reality remained, it could not be focussed on perceptually, nor could individual objects be focussed on visually. Instead, the usual objects on the mind were seen in a global sense. BR

I find that each moment arrives and brings nothing with it that demands engagement *if it's not required*. If there's no need to respond to a situation I find that I remain in a sort of standby state, much like the sleep function on a computer. The potential to fire up is there but if it's not needed there is no processing happening! I still observe and see all the goings-on around me but with very little associated mental activity or emotional response.

Let me give you another very simple example to illustrate how reactions to life situations have changed for me. We recently drove to Udon Thani, a city one hour from our home in rural Thailand. It is a busy traffic-clogged place, as many Thai urban areas are and we hit several red traffic lights on the way to our destination. My *before* the reaction to so many red traffic lights might have been frustration, anger, rants against the government for not coordinating them and who knows what else! The alternative is what I now naturally experience, which is no reaction at all. Internally I feel no different if the lights are red or green. I observe and..... nothing.

The big change between this and my meditation period is that at that time I could engage the stillness of meditation and end up with much the same non-response. However, that required a manual engagement - the acknowledgement of a situation and the application of a trained response – quieting the mind and blanking out the negative thought processes that might arise. That

conscious process doesn't happen now. The appropriate response is an automatic one and I just watch it unfold. A red traffic light needs no reaction – nothing changes if I get angry or not. The light will do what it is going to do in complete isolation to my response to the situation. Which scenario do you think works better and is healthier for my overall state of being?

And this is the last example I will share. On my family's farm in Thailand, I built a floating raft with comfortable seating and a roof for shade. It is my favourite place to be when we visit most mornings for coffee and chat. I end up reading Bernadette's book, editing this one or just sitting in a state of not much and it is a very peaceful time. Sometimes I feel I could spend my life there but at some stage, Gaun, my wife, will shout out in Thai 'bye baan', which translates to 'let's go home'. Now if my *self* was in control, I might feel that I didn't want to go home just then. I might think that I should decide when we go not Gaun. Maybe I want more time to read my book or have another coffee or.....

What actually happens is that I have no emotional reaction at all to her call. I just get up pack my things and we go home. I guess that if there was a strong reason for not going, I would say so but apparently, there isn't because I have yet to stay longer.

You see an ego-driven response is no longer energised because the mind generated *self* is no longer the boss and the reality is I can just as well read my book at home as on the boat. Because no alternative range of emotional options make an appearance, and certainly none of the ego I should be in control type reactions, then my leaving must be perfect at that moment. No subconscious resentment or frustration is stored even if it occurred because that moment immediately fades from the *now* and no longer exists to be recalled and analysed.

Does that all seem very boring? Ah well, maybe it would be if boring was still a tick-a-box on the no-*self* emotional list of options, but like everything beyond the *self*-state if it's not required then it doesn't make an appearance to clutter my life!

If we take away our built-in expectations that life without memories and their emotional package is NO life, then aren't my reactions to those three small-time scenarios more balanced and adult than the alternatives? It's what's missing that is the key benefit to this new way of life. The absence of a *self* means that there is no option other than to live in each moment. There is no historical memory to influence or distract from the *now*, the desire for an emotional hit doesn't happen so there's no action required to fulfil that craving. This is the ultimate mindfulness, a technique taught by psychologists to help people to connect with the *now* by minimising the intrusion of thought processing. However, as I have said before, unlike mindfulness or meditation or other practices this is not an exercise that requires a conscious effort to apply predefined rules of engagement and the outcome may be different from the happiness nirvana promised.

I live this state every moment of the day without thought or effort. Unlike the transition period from Stage Two to Three, there is no alternative offered - ever, not even for a moment.

Living in the now moment there is no question of how we feel or should feel; there is no conflict, struggle, or practice of anything because this moment allows for no

*movement backwards or forward, either in time or along the continuum.
Somehow each moment contains within itself the appropriate action for each tiny
event in life without the need for thought or feeling. BR*

It would be incorrect to assume that by living like this we are somehow cut off from all reactions or emotions - the zombie factor. Where a response is required it makes an appearance but the difference is that it seems to only be energised for a brief period, it doesn't connect to an ego-personality and it then fades without consciously being stored into memory. If I see something funny, I still laugh but afterwards, I would be hard put to replicate the situation or emotion. Is laughing at an amusing situation or feeling peaceful having a morning coffee in our beautiful tropical garden appropriate? Of course, it is. As I wrote previously if you met me you wouldn't pick that underneath the external I have very little happening. From an outsider's view, I project a personality, express views and relate pretty competently. But does frustration help with the red traffic light scenario – not much, so in the context of living in Stage Three for me it doesn't happen.

In writing the preceding words (mostly twelve months ago - I no longer have these thoughts) I have had moments of wondering if what I experience couldn't be classified as a state relating more to some sort of psychological disorder rather than something esoteric. I have no idea what name might be given to the attributes I have described – some form of chronic disassociation maybe?

However, on reflection, I have rejected this idea. This state hasn't made me dysfunctional, as far as I can tell! From my side, although my interpretation of the world is very different from what it was, I actually feel more not less connected. It is difficult to feel separate when the *self* has lost its ability to insert so many thoughts, historical prejudices and emotions into the reality of the moment. The historical pane of glass I described in my Stage Two no longer survives because for it to exist there needs to be a *self* on one side and everything else on the other - the island and the ocean. Remove the *self* and that separation can no longer exist because duality fades. As a result, the glass dissolves and what IS is all there is – the glass and the view become as one.

I came across this passage by Bernadette after I had completed writing this section, which says much the same as I have. I always find it comforting to read that at least one person has gone through the same sort of experiences I have! You will be pleased to know that this is a much easier passage to read than many of Bernadette's observations:

In keeping with this is the admission of a gentleman who said he was terrified at the thought of losing his self. What he had obviously failed to realise was that the terror and dread he felt is the self and that without a self there can be no such feelings. In fact, a sure sign the self is gone is the absence of these affective (feelings/emotions – Tony) symptoms. So as long as there is any fear of losing the self, the self remains - in which case there is nothing to worry about one way or the other. But this is why the histories of those who have truly gone beyond the self will never be found in the psychiatric literature. With no problems in the affective domain, few people would be in need of a psychiatrist or analyst;

indeed, without an affective system, or without a self, this whole school of thought would be out of business.

Yet we cling to the affective system out of fear of what life would be like without it. We're afraid that without feelings we will be inhuman, cold, insensitive, robot-like creatures, so detached from this world that we might as well be dead. Needless to say, there is no truth in this view at all; it is just another myth created out of fear of the unknown - where all myths come from. Nevertheless, to explain what life is like without this system is not easy because it must be lived to be understood, and any description of it only gives rise to an unending chain of philosophical arguments. All that need be said here is that it is a dynamic, intense state of caring; caring for whatever arises in the now-moment. It is a continuous waking state in which the physical organism remains sensitive, responsive, and totally unimpaired. When the journey is over, nothing is found to be missing or wanting. It is only in the encounter with other selves that a self - or affective system - is seen as a continuous reminder of what was.

It is imperative to examine closely and realise that the root of the affective system is a sense of selfhood; a feeling of personal being which is identical to its will, its drives, motivations, values, and goals. This branches out to give rise to memories, desires, and expectations. This fans out still further to colour every perception and thought until it reaches into every experience including the aesthetic sense of beauty, a sense of natural order, a sense of contentment, peace, boredom, tiredness, loneliness, ad infinitum. In a word, this system includes every sense of psychological interiority and feeling of contemplative spirituality that we know of.

This state (no-self – Tony) is nothing more than a simple straightforward look at what is, a look that can no longer scan a continuum that doesn't exist, for options that do not exist. Nor does it look backwards or forward because in the now-moment each moment is sufficient unto itself. It is impossible to step outside this moment wherein there is no choice and no standard. It was this non-relative dimension I found missing when searching through the contemplative literature for insight into this particular state. Since self is a sense of interiority, the criteria of my search for this second contemplative movement was the absence of an interior life — which, of course, I did not find. Instead, I encountered the usual descriptions of love and bliss, lights and energies, God within and the true self, all of them descriptive of the first movement (probably an advanced Stage One in my numbering system – Tony), and all of them belonging to the purely relative affective system.

I understood some of these experiences but had to discount them as belonging to the present movement. I found no one who admitted or even suggested the complete falling away of the affective life. At most, it seems that only its negative

aspects are said to disappear, and it was this fact I found most questionable. If we are to live permanently at the positive affective pole, I do not see the possibility of a balanced life, nor do I see the impossibility of sooner or later experiencing a dip in the opposite direction. With the exception of the near immovable centre, every point or movement on the continuum is relative to some other movement; thus, as long as the system exists we can never get beyond the relativity of our experiences. Feelings of love, bliss, joy, and all things ineffable are merely relative to their opposite, their absence, or some other point along the continuum; so, when I encountered these descriptions I knew they were not what I was looking for. BR

I came across this talk by Krishnamurti on YouTube, which you can find [HERE](#), and I extracted a few of his words, which I think make sense in this context:

So, to understand oneself there must be observation, and that observation can only take place now. And the now is not the movement of the past which observes the now. You see the difference? I can observe the now from the past, from my past conclusions, prejudices, hopes, fears and all the rest of it. Which is an observation from the past of the present, and I think I am observing the now. But the observation of the now can only take place when there is no observer who is the past. You understand this? So, observation of the now becomes extraordinarily important. Which, as we said the other day, the movement of the past, meeting the present must end there, that is the now, but if you allow it to go on then the now becomes the future, or the past, but never the actual now. I hope you understand all this.

So, observation can only take place in the now; in the very doing of it when you are angry, when you are greedy, to observe it as it is. Which means not to condemn it, not to judge it, but to watch it and let it flower and disappear. You understand the beauty of it? Oh, come on! Traditionally we are educated to suppress, or to move within a certain direction. What we are saying is: to observe your anger, your greed, your sexual demands, whatever it is, and to observe without the past so that the anger flowers and disappears, withers away. And when you do that you will never be angry again. I don't know if you have ever done these things: do it sometime and you will discover it for yourself. To allow, through observation, in which there is no choice, just to observe your greed, your envy, your jealousy, whatever it be, and in the very observation of it, it is flowering and undergoing a radical change.

Stage Three finds me solidly in a *less-self* state of being, which I find to be a preferable place to be than one totally controlled by the *mind*. However, I don't believe this is the end of the road and more is required before any chance of realising the Truth. I try to envisage what those changes might look like in the next chapter with Bernadette's help.

Where to Next?

Chapter Ten:

I have stated a number of times in this book that I believe I have only reached a staging post on the journey to the Truth, a process that still requires some very significant and fundamental changes to be worked through, maybe more so than has been realised to date.

There is a moment, just as consciousness arises in the waking state when there is a flash of pure knowing. This 'knowing' is just the closing of the gap, the subject/object consciousness. For that moment there is no 'I' no 'other' only the Unknown. It seems that in that instant, the veil of duality is lifted, momentarily. The doorway through is the Silence. Amy

The slightly scary but also sort of reassuring aspect of this journey is that the question 'where to next?' doesn't need my active involvement. It seems that this isn't a process that requires energy to be expended on normal actions like setting goals and making detailed plans to reach the next stage. At some point, as I have said before using Bernadette's words, the *divine takes over* and energy other than the conscious controls and sets an agenda and determines the timing involved. I guess we just have to hang on and see what happens!

Having lived through Stage Two with no idea of what was going on, and in retrospect that was unfortunate, I now believe that there is a benefit in having some concept of what might happen next. The difficulty is that I doubt there is a lot of information available on the subject. Not being an energetic reader on this topic honestly, I have no idea but Bernadette writes about the unexpectedness of her experiences because of the lack of forewarnings. Amy doesn't cover it, although I presume she made the transition, as her book finishes ten years before her death and is more concerned with Stage Two/Three aspects. Bernadette also writes very little about this subject in her book.

Before I came across Bernadette's version of what I would call Stage Four and hints to the final destination, I had written some words based on my own guesswork and, as I think they still have relevance, I have used them as an introduction before merging into more recent writing:

I am sure that in the following I am only stating what I will read with more comprehension later but my feeling is that to progress there has to be a change to the fixed point from which I observe the world. In fact, the next day after writing this I was sitting on the boat with a morning coffee - some of my best insights happen at these times (my dear mum had a lot of her realisations when in the bath!) and came across an entry by Bernadette on the subject of what she calls *pure subjectivity* (where subject and object are identical):

Pure subjectivity is the eye of seeing itself, and whatever it looks at sees nothing but itself. It knows no within or without.....The eye seeing itself knows no 'I, me or mine' since it knows nothing that is not 'I, me or mine' and therefore has no need to make such a distinction.

My reading of this at its most extreme interpretation is that at some stage we move from the less/no-self I write about as Stage Three in this book to a different view again. This is because I currently still experience a central point of seeing, even if the objects are neutral in their impact:

While perceiving, Buddha nature is empty of a perceiver, while being empty, there is still experience. Tulku Urygen Rinpoche.

My connection to that centre-point, even if more diluted, still creates what Bernadette calls a subjective consciousness (the duality of a subject/object). *Pure* subjectivity would take this view to another level and would involve the complete death of the *self* by removing the less/no-self view of the world and replace it with a true no-self all-encompassing view. With no *self*-centred point on any level, everything must become as one.

This assumption may be supported by Bernadette (*yes, it is – read on*). Although she doesn't write a lot about the journey after the no-self stage in her book, she hints at life beyond in the extract below. As with everything related to this topic reading the words on a purely intellectual level only makes limited sense, for me anyway. It is when the words become a reality when intellectualism is replaced by experience, that their full meaning takes life. If you have a hang-up about the word *God* then substitute the *Truth*, which is neutral:

What this means is that all our experiences of silence are nothing more, yet nothing less, than the silence of no-self — a mysterious foretaste of what is yet to be. It means the waters of self are gradually being wrung from the structure of being; that the mechanism of self-consciousness is coming to an end in a way we may never understand. And above all, it means that without a self we are free to come upon that which lies beyond any notion or experience of silence. No-self is not God; rather, it is the gap between self and God, and the gateway to what is not only beyond the self but beyond no-self as well.

So here, the first movement is the transition from self to no-self, while the second movement is the transition from no-self to nowhere — meaning nowhere in particular, yet everywhere in general. It is a transition from a relative silence to the non-relative silence of what Is, and if I call the latter a silence it is because no

words can be used for description. It can be known, however, known as it knows itself; what Is, knows not words nor does it communicate as such.

In the above Bernadette refers to the *first movement*, which I call Stage Three (no-self), while her *second movement* is the final revealing of the Truth (I think), which she describes in part as:

.....the awareness of everything else falls away -- the body, surroundings, the silence, everything — and compared to this intensity, the loss of self is as nothing.....

In my reading of Bernadette's words, there is a transition stage in-between her first and second movement and she introduces this by downplaying the first movement (my Stage Three) and wonders why this experience of reality couldn't remain.

I often wondered why this state of affairs could not last forever, but I now see this was not the final step; it was only the first step into a new existence and a whole new way of knowing. It was just a beginning.

Having gone through a pretty intense period to reach this third stage it is a bit daunting to have someone refer to it as 'a beginning'. However, once you are living it, that's exactly what it does feel like. Somehow there is an innate realisation that this is a temporary milestone, that the job isn't finished and there is more to come.

Unfortunately, according to Bernadette the first part of the *more to come* is far more intense than the *Transition* I wrote about and, as with so much of this journey, if one does come across a foretaste of what the future might hold, it doesn't read as an experience one would voluntarily aim to participate in! I believe that the no-choice option is the only way we ever get to the destination because if we apply our *self*-based logical judgements and choices to what we read then we'd be taking the red pill antidote quick-smart and return to normal *ignorance is bliss*.

The second step (lasting about four months) was by far the most difficult period of my life, and of my own accord it was a step I would never have taken, not for all the promises in heaven. Though I cannot account for the exact mechanism that brings it about, it makes sense to say that without a knowable subject, we must soon be without a knowable object, since subject and object are functionally relational and not just logically so. Sooner or later the relation between a knowable object and an unknowable subject must fall apart when no relationship can possibly be established. At the same time, it appears as if the emptiness of the empirical subject had finally caught up with, and engulfed, all empirical objects in its own nothingness. Thus, in the absence of a subject, the initial compensating factor of pure objectivity eventually gave way to reveal the absolute void of all objects to the mind.

This second step seems to be a state of consciousness in which there is neither subject nor object, and if any relationship persists between the knower and known, it is the identity of absolute nothingness. This is a state of complete unknowing, wherein the usual methods of knowing have been cut off, and the only knowable thing remaining is an empty, meaningless, empirical reality. What is more, while in this state, there were times when I doubted if even consciousness remained because it too, had a curious way of disappearing and leaving nothing in its wake. BR

Cool - something to look forward to! Reading another newly discovered passage from Bernadette below I think it supports what I wrote earlier in this chapter:

Pure subjectivity would involve the final destruction of the self by dissolving the single point of observing the world and replace it with an all-encompassing view. With no self-centred point, all views become one. BR

I want to expand on the *single point* because it is the basis for understanding why there is more work required to truly achieve a no-self reality.

I find that although the connection with an ego-self has been greatly diminished in Stage Three, there is still an entity that sits in the centre of my view of life. I don't recognise Tony Eastmead as a physical or self-based subject, but I haven't totally faded from existence and I still feel that I project a presence in the world around me, even if it is in a muted form. The objects that form my view of the world are not processed via the normal self/mind channels, but the act of seeing those objects surrounding my single point of reference still creates separation, however, diluted, and therefore the subject/object relationship continues to apply influence.

Previously my centeredness and place in the world were determined by my self-identity, with all its built-in supportive mind baggage. I was the subject, a physical blob, surrounded by the mass of individual objects, each one carrying its own DNA of attributes as determined by my observation and processing of those objects through the mind. Once this centre is weakened in Stage Three our *me-ness*, our centredness in the world is more determined by everything that surrounds us rather than being set by the mind/ego, of a Tony Eastmead looking out at everything else. It's a bit like determining your position using a map. You firstly physically look at what unique attributes surround you and you then match them to the same aspects shown on the map and that determines your current position! Your pace in the landscape comes about by what surrounds you.

Bernadette proposes that subject/object are interdependent and once the subject dissolves (becoming less/no-self) then objects cannot exist in isolation and eventually fade.

Sooner or later the relation between a knowable object and an unknowable subject must fall apart when no relationship can possibly be established.

This leads to the final transition she writes about where to break through this final barrier to realising the Truth a disconnection from the view by removing the centre-point is required and without a subject or object there can only be the *now* in its purest form. Without unique landmarks, it is impossible to position yourself on that map.

Though all doors to knowing had been tightly closed, there remained nevertheless a way out — a way I would not have dreamt possible. Without any means of knowing what remains in the absence of subject and object, the burden of proof falls squarely on whatever it is that does remain, which means it can make itself known — it can reveal itself. There may be no guarantee this will happen, but I believe no one sets out on such a journey unless this revelation has been intended from the beginning. And it is this timely revelation that brings about the third and final step in the transition between two incompatible ways of knowing.

Evidently, the revelation of what remains knows its own time and will only appear when it cannot possibly be mistaken for something else, or when the ground has been so thoroughly prepared, no weeds can grow up to choke its truth or ever hide it again. Once the ground is cleared of all obstacles or objects of consciousness, that which remains comes in the dark like a single shaft of light casting no shadows — no doubt or error — and thus, it is seen as nothing ever seen before.

*For me, this disclosure occurred in the simple empirical gesture of a smile whereby **the smile itself, that which smiled, and that at which it smiled were known as identical**. In the immediacy of this way of knowing, the three aspects of the One were clear. BR*

The supposition Bernadette makes is that the final transition totally removes all the remaining elements that establish our physical and emotional place in the world – the *self*-identity is finally destroyed in every aspect and the leap of faith is that in that state eventually, a new and totally natural way of seeing emerges, the Truth that has always been there hidden under the layers of our *self*-generated identity.

By the time the journey is over, the only possible way of living is in the now-moment, wherein the mind moves neither backward nor forward but remains fixed and fully concentrated in the present. Because of this, the mind is so open

and clear that no preconceived notions can get a foothold; no idea can be carried over from one moment to another; much less, could any notion demand conformity from others. There are no more head-trips — no clinging to a frame of reference, even if it is only the reference to tomorrow's expectations. In a word, what is to be done or thought is always underfoot, with no need to step aside in order to find out what is to be thought, believed, or enacted.

In the now-moment the self never arises; nothing calls upon it to do so. The eye seeing itself lives and holds everything tightly at this moment, a moment that has no need of a self. But even if we persist with the notion of self, such a label adds nothing to pure subjectivity. It tells us nothing more about it, and any clinging to self as a notion or an experience certainly constitutes an obstacle to clear vision.
BR

All of this is guesswork of course. To spend more time on what the future may or may not look like is a total waste of time in my opinion. It either happens or doesn't. It either finalises in a new reality or not. I have NO influence on that process so why bother trying to pre-guess the process in detail. What Bernadette has written about of her own experiences has matched my experiences so far in a broad sense so I suspect that the general alignment will continue. As I am doing nothing to generate further change myself all that is required is to wait and see what happens next, which I will report on as it impacts if it does. Maybe this is as far as it goes!

Bernadette:

When returning the manuscript, a friend asked me, 'Now really, would you honestly recommend this journey to others?' I had to laugh; the use of the word 'recommend' made the account sound like a sales pitch for a travel agency, wherein I was recommending everyone buy a ticket for what — to my friend, at least — was a most uncomfortable journey. As it stands, of course, the choice to make this passage or not to make it is not ours. When it is time for departure — a time no man knows — this ship of life moves into new waters, and without a self, we have no say and no control. Then too, starting from different directions, we will each pass through different terrain and set of events. We will each be going beyond a different self so that the relative differences we notice along the way will not be the same; no two journeys can possibly be alike. BR

Who can understand what it means to learn that the ultimate reality is not a passing moment

of bliss, not a fleeting vision or transfiguration, not some ineffable, extraordinary experience or phenomenon but instead, is as close as our eyes, as simple as a

smile, and as clear as the identity of 'that' which remains when there is no self?
Bernadette Roberts (thank you)

I have three more chapters to add, two of which have been very recently completed and I include them below *The Mind and Metadata* and *The Silent Mind*, and one more chapter on the topic of *Time*, which is still in draft form.

The Mind and Metadata

Chapter Eleven:

Reviewed and updated 3 March 2019

My wife Gaun recently took a photo of us together using her recently purchased phone. This is a little unusual in that although I have lots of photos of Gaun we don't have a lot of us as a couple as Gaun isn't big on selfies (thank goodness) and neither am I.



What struck me when I later looked at the photo was that I found that I had no connection with the person sitting next to Gaun and I wanted to give some context to that odd statement for my benefit if no one else's.

In my logical mind I know that the person on the right is me but beyond that assumption, it could equally be someone I have never met before. This is because the image doesn't produce any corresponding internal surge of personal characteristics, memories or anything at all in fact. It is a totally flat image on a screen and beyond that, it has no depth. This happens because the 'real' Tony entity looking at that image from this side has no associated response to give life to the photo. Let me try to explain.

If you have ever used photo editing software you will know that every image has built-in information that together with the visual picture makes that photo what it is. This data is usually viewed under a heading such as 'properties' or 'metadata', and it provides useful information about the basics that sit behind the photo, things like when it was taken, and if you are using a camera phone or modern SLR, the GPS locations, through to more geekier aspects such as the camera settings used, a histogram etc.

So, there are the two integrated aspects to every image – the actual scene, which is the visual output, which gets most of our conscious attention, and then behind that sits all the metadata, which automatically records where on your timeline the photo sits and the technical aspects attached to the very moment you took that image.

If you follow an Indian spiritual path you might be familiar with what I call metadata in this context being referred to as samskaras, which Wikipedia defines as follows:

Samskaras or sanskaras (Sanskrit: संस्कार) are, in [Indian philosophy](#) and [Indian religions](#), mental impressions, recollections, or psychological imprints. In Hindu philosophies, samskaras are a basis for the development of [karma theory](#).^{[1][2]}

According to various schools of Indian philosophy, every action, intent or preparation by an individual leaves a samskara (impression, impact, imprint) in the deeper structure of the person's mind.^[2] These impressions then await volitional fruition in that individual's future, in the form of hidden expectations, circumstances or a subconscious sense of self-worth. These Samskaras manifest as tendencies, karmic impulses, subliminal impressions, habitual potencies or innate dispositions.^{[2][3]} In ancient Indian texts, the theory of Samskara explains how and why human beings remember things, and the effect that memories have on people's suffering, happiness and contentment.

In a normal *self*-conscious state, we operate in exactly the same way as a camera taking photos or videos. All of our life images are perceived from a central 'me' (camera) point of reference and then stored in memory. Each moment has a set of 'properties' attached to it – time, locations, names, emotions and so on. When remembering an event from the past those images are recalled from memory and recreated to overlay the current moment. It's not just the images that are recalled as they also bring with them all of the associated metadata attached to them, that gives life to that particular memory. Like a photo taken on a camera, the image and its properties are a package. One is permanently linked to the other. If you recall a situation that has anger stored as part of the metadata then most likely the same anger will re-emerge in the current moment if that event is recalled, because it is built into the properties of that historical memory.

So, this process involves a two-stage process - two aspects of observation. Firstly, each moment is viewed and captured with all of the associated metadata. Secondly, that observation is transferred to our 'database' of memories - both the image itself and the metadata that is attached to it. For

most people the every day is placed in a data folder called 'forget memories' and will be stored deeper within, often making its recovery impossible. However, the more dramatic moments will be moved to our 'active memory' folder and from there we are able to relive both the images and their metadata as required.

So, what would happen if all of the aspects that define a photo, the metadata or properties, were erased? It seems logical to assume that without the properties of a photo then and no image can exist as an energised defining moment on life's timeline. As Amy wrote in her book:

I noticed more and more now, that all events seemed to disappear from memory into the inner void. Driving away from home and all its small dramas, only the present environment of the road and tree-lined streets seemed to be, and they, in turn, disappeared to be replaced with the home of a friend, and the friend herself. All the external pictures of my world seemed to appear momentarily only, and then return to the Emptiness. Memories are lifeless, like the negatives of a black and white film, and the constant pendulum of the mind slows down, the swing from past to future decreases - strange really.

From my experience, this is what happens in the stages beyond the self. I find that the built-in memory metadata somehow no longer works and as a result, no historical situations are retained in the way we would normally associate them as a function of memory. What we have always unthinkingly assumed as being an essential and self-defining part of our lives fades away and the result is a new way of observing and reacting to the unfolding panorama and events of life.

I have found that this loss of metadata has two main effects. One is that historical memory, the recalled images and situations that make up the past, fades almost completely. In fact, the longer I live in this state the more absolute the erasure of the past, not just long-term images but the immediate past isn't given any life energy within the current moment. An event happens, it is observed, it passes and cannot be recalled in any vivid way if at all.

The second effect is that each moment is still observed as a constantly changing series of images; life doesn't suddenly go blank, but very little additional information is attached to what is observed. This is why I can look at that photo of Gaun and me and although I know that it is a photo of Gaun and Tony and logically I can place it at the Thai family home over the 2018 Christmas period, none of the other properties of emotion or situation is recalled. There is no way I can recreate sufficient metadata to bring that historical point in time to life nor put myself as being there.

I have to say that I find this stage is difficult on some levels and as I keep saying in this book, not one I would choose left to my own devices. For example, Gaun and I were watching the 2018/19 New Year Sydney fireworks and for me, all I could see were a panorama of images. I have actually been to Sydney's New Year's Eve fireworks having drinks on a boat in the harbour so in a 'normal' situation historical memory would bring life and energy to the act of seeing it again, but not so. Because there

is no emotion or memory created by the images being displayed, what I end up viewing is a series of scenes without context or connection, and I find it is unable to hold my attention.

The same 'observation only' state applies to all my life. I see a visual panorama and I can operate effectively within it but none of those images seems to come with any recognised metadata that generates much if any physical or emotional response in the conscious self. This seems to be the natural outcome you are forced to live in the Now, *Stage Three* as described in this book. It is Mindfulness in its purest form, but rather than bringing with it a more intense emotional connections because of the one-pointedness of each moment, the opposite happens and it brings nothing with it at all. Increased focus only achieves a deeper silence and a state of pure observation.

The saving grace to what must read as a pretty unrewarding stage in life is the completeness of this transformation. I can write about how life might be like outside of this state but I can't experience it so it doesn't register emotionally as something I am missing out on. Having moved beyond that very challenging interim state where the old and new battled for supremacy, the period I called *The Transition* in this book (page 27), no alternative is offered and the absence of emotional responses works in my favour by not overwhelming me with feelings of loss, regret or isolation.

The Silent Mind

Chapter Twelve:

Reviewed and updated 3 March 2019

'I think therefore I am'. Rene Descartes wrote in 1637

There may be many interpretations to this quote by Descartes but mine in this context is a literal one. The process of thinking requires someone who is doing the thinking - an ego-personality - the identification with a 'me' or 'I'. The continual affirmation of our separateness and individualism is supported by the mind and its ability to weave never-ending stories about who we are, which we take for granted and it is this that gives life and energy to the identity we associate as 'me' without questioning.

In the scope of our discussion based on moving beyond a self, what would happen if we reversed the quote to read 'I don't think therefore I am not' - would that stand the test of my personal experience?

Well, the answer to that question is both a yes and no. There are a number of misdirections on this journey that I previously took as being a given, a few that that may well be true for some people, but they certainly haven't been part of my experience so far. These include anticipated milestones such as a Big Bang Enlightenment, the achievement of a life of permanent bliss and harmony and finally my confusion over what the silent mind might look like in reality.

My misconception on this aspect of the journey had its origins in my early days, which were based on mantra focussed meditation and repetitive chanting. The goal of this yoga was what my teacher described as 'stilling the modifications of the mind' and it was always my belief that in order to reach any sort of final conclusion to the journey (I was still hooked on 'Tony in a blissful state' at this time) a thought-free mind was an integral component to the tick-a-box pre-requisite. Maybe it is but, in my experience, there are progressive stages to get there rather than a sudden arrival of internal silence in one of those anticipated dramatic spiritual experiences.

My mother wrote extensively about the silent mind and this supported my belief that stilling the mind was a gateway to the Truth. For example, Amy gave this description of silencing of the mind she experienced as a once-off early on her path:

It was a week or so later that I woke suddenly in the night and found that my mind was held in a state where thought was impossible. There was just a state of 'no-thought'. I lay in bed looking up into the darkness unable to formulate any concepts as to what had happened to my mind. At last, feeling that doing

something might help, I got up and went into the kitchen and made myself a cup of tea. Evidently thought was not necessary for action. There was an undercurrent of fear, but without the ability to think and to analyse, there was just what was: a state of emptiness.

For me then it came as a surprise when I moved into a largely no-self state (stage 3) but thinking didn't stop. Thoughts still flowed and the mind wasn't held in a totally silent state. In my example what I was experiencing could be described by mixing the Descartes quote to read 'I still think and yet I am not'. It was a sort of 50/50 outcome. Identification with an ego had mostly left the building but the aspect of thinking, which I anticipated would exit with it, still remained. However, the longer and deeper my new state of realisation lasts and the more I reflect on what the mind now looks like at this time, I come to acknowledge that things are not as they were and I want to expand on that.

Let's look at some words extracted from a chapter in Bernadette's book titled *The Silent Mind* as it offers a useful introduction to an alternative view for the type of silent mind that I currently experience, at this stage of the journey anyway. I have added my own comments based on experience to each of Bernadette's points, the latter being in italics:

1. *The state of no-self is the breaking up of a self-conscious system whereby the mind can no longer see itself as an object; and at the same time, it loses the ability to find any other object to take its place because when there is no self there is also no other.*

TONY: A perfect summary of Stage 3. I can attest to this description as this is exactly the state I find myself as I describe in this book. My latest chapter *The Mind and Metadata*, written before I started to edit this *Silent Mind* chapter, offers my interpretation of the base cause for this no-self state, although I cannot offer any specific explanation of how to get there.

2. *Where before, thought has been a product of a reflecting introspection, objectifying mechanism – ever coloured with personal feelings and biases – now thought arises spontaneously off the top of the head, and what is more, it arises in the now-moment which is concerned with the immediate present, making it invariably practical.*

TONY: Once again my chapter *The Mind and Metadata* gives an explanation of how the loss of emotional memory recall, 'ever coloured with personal feelings and biases' as Bernadette describes it, that gives energy to the thoughts of the moment fades in the no-self state. Yet, we don't become zombie-like with no ability to process and respond to everyday life.

For those of you who literally apply the Descartes quote and believe that you need to think to exist, I find it isn't quite like that and reactions to life and thinking in a no-self state is similar to the natural instincts involved in riding a bike, as an example. There is no conscious recall of memory or learned skills required to jump on a bike and ride away (as long as you do know how to ride!) The physical participation of that moment does not require the active involvement of the mind. It is action without thought – a no-self *doing*.

3. *What this means is that thinking goes right on even when there is no self, no thinker, and no self-consciousness; thus, there is no such thing as a totally silent mind.*

TONY: I also find this to be true (at this point anyway) and an unexpected outcome based on my meditation practices as previously stated. However, I do experience an increasing internal silence the longer I exist in this state. The whole character of thinking has changed dramatically and I will expand on that shortly.

4. *One way to look at this journey is to see it as a process of acclimation to an unself-conscious mind, or as a transition from a relative to a non-relative way of knowing.*

TONY: This is one of Bernadette's statements that I have read before but now makes sense because it matches my reality. In a few simple words, she describes the essence of a fundamental change to life that removes our reliance on a personality, ego-based thought driven process to a far more subtle 'unselfconscious' alternative. Thoughts are now spontaneous in their arrival in the conscious mind applicable to the context of the moment and they come with no attached 'personal feelings or biases' (metadata).

So, the awakening is simply the awakening out of the dream of thought; out of being totally immersed in that dream. Not that thought does not arise, it still can arise and does arise and yet you dwell beyond thought. In the state of presence, stillness, alert awake stillness in which nothing is known and yet everything is known. Tolle

5. *This means that the silent aspect of the mind is actually the absence of self, or as I prefer to call it – the silence of no-self.*

TONY: I found that what Bernadette calls 'the silence of no-self' is how it has worked for me. The transition to a 'no-self' reality in itself does not require a loss of thinking - a silent mind prerequisite. I found that my early days in Stage 3 still had a strong element of thinking, although thoughts didn't have the power over my actions, reactions and emotions as they had before. My experience is that the dissolving of the mind's modifications has been a gradual process AFTER achieving a measure of no-self.

In editing this chapter and reflecting on my reality I realise that in fact, a degree of silence has crept up on me without any fanfare of arrival. The words I type now come from somewhere that does not require thoughtful reflection. Once I stop typing and look at the view of the Thai farm pond in front of me (a timber hut on the edge of the pond is where I mostly edit this book) there is observation but absolutely no thought.

6. *It takes a while to adjust to a new way of life wherein it eventually discovers that the basic structure of the mind and its facilities remain intact and perfectly functional, but functional in a new way.*

TONY: It is the subtle nature of this increasingly thought free environment that allows for a more comfortable adjustment. The extent of the loss of a constant flow of thoughts has been largely unnoticed. I will expand on the concept of a new way of functioning later.

7. *Once the mind can no longer reflect on itself, all energy or movement of the self is gone; the feelings and emotions are in silence; the memory has been so denuded that the past is lifeless without continuum at all.*

TONY: Totally supported in my reality and by the chapter, I keep referring to *The Mind and Metadata*. I won't repeat what I have already covered in that space.

8. *A silent mind is not a blank mind – the thinking goes right on, but now it passes the synaptic self that continually colours incoming data before sending it out again. The thoughts that now come to the mind do not arise from within but originate 'off the top', so to speak, and then, only when dealing with the obvious data on hand at any given time.*

TONY: It is this distinction between a 'silent mind' and a 'blank' mind that is the key because unless it is experienced the two would normally be considered the same. The word 'blank' in this context is like the nightmares of sitting an exam, opening the paper and the mind goes 'blank' in response to the questions posed. Many of us have experienced that moment - a paralysis of thought, or certainly of thought relevant to that situation. The actuality of a silent mind is different in that it still allows for the automatic access to whatever is required to function normally within the scenario presented at that moment. It just is that there are no stories attached to where that response originated from.

9. *In this way, the mind is always clear, but not clear of thought per se, only clear of thought that had been clouded and infected by the waters of self.*

TONY: A spot on summary of all the previous points. I only respond to statements like these based on my actual experiences. Mine is not a book of theory or supposition. This chapter has existed in draft form for many months but never finished because I didn't have a full understanding of what was being described. I wasn't totally in the state Bernadette described or if I was, I couldn't describe it. The motivation and energy to complete this section arrived much more recently and I know why it has because now my everyday experience has given life and understanding of what was previously a theoretical concept.

These following words from Amy give another insight into what I have written so far. She speaks not only to the silent mind but the fact that while some aspect of self still views that stillness there is more work to do, which I discussed previously in that chapter *Where to Next*.

This state of inner stillness or 'fasting' of the mind, as Maharaj sometimes called it, makes living very focused in the present moment, but there is still the duality of 'me' experiencing the void, a witness to this state of Emptiness, and so there is still more to lose in the way of self-consciousness.

So, having given a foundation to this topic using Bernadette as a source how does this 'active' silent mind work in everyday life for me?

- Firstly, where before an active focus is required to slow down or stop the endless natural flow of thought, using disciplines like meditation, now it is almost a case of mentally kickstarting a thought process to get anything happening internally. I am not at that point yet but I have certainly noticed a gradual shift to a default state where silence rules and this is over-layered by thoughts that tend to 'float' cloud-like, without strong definition, and pass through consciousness leaving no emotional or mental trace. These are largely powerless thoughts or in Bernadette's words, they are free of being *infected by the waters of the self*.
- Silence in the *now* is helped by the fact that the past mostly doesn't intrude into the current moment. As discussed in the last chapter, once the metadata attached to memory images is dissolved then there is nothing to energise thoughts and give them the power to override the current moment. I can vaguely recall a faint historical timeline but nothing comes with it in the form of emotions or reality that feeds the mind's appetite and desire for thought creating energy. Without an emotional stimulus-reward, it seems that the mind just doesn't bother trying to delve back into the past to retrieve memories to play across the cinema screen of the present.
- I find that thoughts about possible future events still make an appearance but in a very practical way rather than as an energy-sapping series of what-ifs and exploration about the feelings that might be associated with the achievement of that activity - the emotional payback/reward.

For example, last week I felt like spending some time at my favourite local Buddhist wat (temple). Desires like these seem to arrive not as a strongly held urge or as part of some schedule of activities but just as a softly arising suggestion that sits comfortably within that moment. I describe this as a 'softly arising' because the concept is the only energy that appears in the conscious mind. The normal hard thinking that would accompany that urge such as scheduling a time, deciding what specifically might I do when I get there or how I will feel about the whole experience - the whole future vision thing - is totally absent. There is no expectation and little detail attached to this event on my day's list of activities because none is required to make it happen. I don't need to explore all the maybes and emotions about visiting a temple. It will either happen or it won't, either of these outcomes has no effect on my state of being and my experience when I am at the wat will be what it is.

I find that this example can be generally applied across the range of thinking where this 'softly' floating thought is the norm rather than being an exception or the result of the application of some mindful discipline.

Like everything related to the description of my experience on this path, it is based on my personal observation only. I don't suggest this is the progression of stages or altered reality someone else will experience. Moving to deeper levels of that experience, as Amy writes about later in her journey, will either happen or not. I have had no control over the steps of this process so far and am not expecting that state of affairs to change!

Time

Chapter Thirteen:

Reviewed and updated 3 March 2019

One of the interesting side-effects of Stage Three has been my re-evaluation of the concept of time once it is observed outside a *self*-based reality.

Our misinterpretation of time has as its basis the belief that it is linear, in other words, we think that time is a continuum formed on one side by our past, as created by our memories with their attached metadata, and on the other our thought projections of an imagined future. I have always visualised time like an invisible line, with the past on the left and the future on the right of where I am now. I wonder if this imagery is universal?

At the 'centre point' of this timeline, where the past and future meet, is the *now* moment, which in reality is the only point we ever truly exist but rarely recognise. Past and future are of course only a play of the mind as neither have a reality in the *now* moment. As I have described in *The Silent Mind* chapter, it is only when historical memories fade and future projections and thought, in general, become 'like clouds in the sky' that the reality of our existence at a point on the birth to death movie reel becomes both unsupported and increasingly irrelevant.

We all know that the past and the future are imaginings of the mind played out in the present moment. There is no dispute about these aspects to our *self*-experienced lives. So what gives these thought created illusions the power they have over us, the decisions we make and the emotions we feel in the 'right now' moment? The answer to these questions is that it is the mind's in-built, automatic energising of most thoughts to give them as much reality as possible, to recreate the past as a complete package of experience and fuel the desires and fears of the future. In essence, the mind given free rein will power-up those 'It was as if I was really there' past recalls and 'what if' projection imaginings of the future. This is an aspect of our lives that we take as normal, and accept as an essential part of who we are. It is only when we try to stop the intrusion of the mind through disciplines like meditation, that we come to realise just how powerful this force is and how hard it is to slow down or to stop its never-ending desire to overwhelm us with data.

Why does the mind play this role of movie projectionist filling our life with absorbing images and their attached emotional playmates? It is because all of this provides energy and security to the self, the ego, the me, those aspects that we think are the essence of who we are. Remove power from these memories and the associated projections that go with them and a new way of seeing and living emerge naturally by default.

So, to go back and expand on the theory and recap on some points I have made previously in this book but now apply to a 'time' perspective.

Firstly, let's explore the concept of the past, which is brought to life through the play of memory, fooling us into thinking that we have left the present moment. All memories create a disconnect on

some level with the actual experience of the *now* moment and retrieve and re-energise a historical point on our personal timeline. When we think about a situation in our past, we can imagine a *me* being there, a central solid entity of 'Tony' for example, around which the stored perceptions of that moment are pulled out of the data banks and brought to life on the screen of our imagination. The images in themselves are powerless but it is the attached metadata of emotions that gives these pictures so much influence in the *now*. The conjoined twins of image and emotions are what energises these illusions and suddenly we find that we have somehow time-travelled to a date-stamp in the past even though our physical reality sits in the *now*.

It is this ability to delve into energised memory that makes us think our existence is in continual movement, that we are a separate entity moving, from left to right, from past to future, on our timeline. When we recall an event that happened say four years ago this memory provides evidence that supports the illusion of a timeline where a 'me' existed stretching back from now to a point four years ago. Once that happens in our mind, we create a 'bridge' from then to now and the past becomes a reality and is incorporated into who we think we are and how we live in the present.

So, memory is central to the delusion of *self* because in order to experience the past there has to be a *me* to recall the events and a connection to a separate body entity to feel the emotions those memories generate. As I discovered in Stage 3 that once the metadata of memories were wiped from my 'hard-drive', it became almost impossible to recall the images that previously this metadata pointed me to. With no conscious ability to access memory, I found that the whole 'left side' of the timeline, those 'bridges' that connect events to create a continuum, faded and by default I have become centred in what was the middle point - the *now* moment.

I would like to further breakdown this concept of memory in a more theoretical way, which makes sense for me if no one else! I need to do this because I am not describing a descent into a state of dementia. There are aspects of memory that don't fade, otherwise, we couldn't function effectively in life. I can still find my home, remember my wife's name, my PIN number and drive a car, all of which have useful day to day applications :-)

I will probably cover some of the same things I have before using different words so stick with me as there is enough new stuff to make the brief read worthwhile. Also, as this following section comprises some aspects, I wrote last year, I didn't want to discard my previous efforts :-)

I view memory as having three distinct aspects. The first is what I call *historical memory* and this is very much a central part of the *self*-based on the recall of images of events, places, people and situations we have stored as real in the mind. There is a strong link between the *self* and *historical memory* because fading of the latter results in a fading of *self*.

The second is what I previously referred to as *emotional memory*, but now prefer to call *metadata*. This latter term is better suited to its descriptive task as it not only incorporates the recollection of the feelings and emotions, we attached to these historical events but all other related data that was created and stored at that moment in time. *Historical memory* and *metadata* usually combine their influences (the conjoined twins) in the process of recall, but not always. For example, perhaps you can remember a situation in the past as an image but not how you felt about that moment when it happened or alternatively you might have a vague emotion relating to an event you are currently

experiencing, which relates to something from the past, but not clearly recall what the context was that caused this response. Take a fear of heights as an example. This might relate to a childhood event that has been lost to conscious memory but still generates a response in the now. The fear still exists but the original cause that led to that phobia doesn't.

The third leg of memory is *practical memory*, which is vital for our continued physical maintenance once we move out of a *self*-based existence and I will discuss that shortly.

So, *historical*, *metadata* and *practical* memory visually comprise the 'left hand' side of our timeline of existence. The right-hand side is given life by our mental ability to become immersed in the future through our imaginings of what a time yet to come will look like. These fantasies have an equal power to divert our attention from the present and take us to a whole *self*-created world complete with its own set of metadata. If you think about an upcoming job interview you will most likely not only create a projection of the circumstances of that event but also the attached emotions of confidence and excitement or fear and nervousness, which will be felt as a physiological response in the *now*.

The future can be divided into two aspects solely for the purpose of an intellectual proposition being *practical* and *fantasy* imagination, although both are equally unreal at their core. The *practical* incorporates thoughts and images surrounding a potential 'real' event or situation - what you will say to your boss tomorrow about that raise, the speech you might be about to give or a shopping list. *Fantasy* imagination is the ability to create a situation that doesn't currently exist in your projected future - winning the lottery, getting that promotion or finding your partner in life. Both imaginings are equally unreal of course and support the illusion that once again we can become a Doctor Who time traveller but on the right-hand side of our timeline.

The combination of historical memory recall and an imagined future is what powers the reality of who we think we are in this immediate moment by colouring in the blank spaces of our personality. When these two influences dissolve, as part of the transition to a *no-self* Stage Three reality, gradually the concept of a linear timeline stretching from a starting point in the past (birth) to some imagined destination in the future (finally death of course) fades as well. That which remains is a single point of consciousness, complete in itself that requires no conscious access to a past or future to give it life, personality or ability to react appropriately to life's events and challenges.

The more settled I become in a *no-self* existence the completer and more natural this reality becomes, not through choice or the application of some discipline, but just because that is how life is from the moment I wake in the morning. An alternative is unthinkable because an alternative is unthinkable!

I have assured you previously that *no-self* existence isn't a zombie transformation or as Bernadette says:

We're afraid that without feelings we will be inhuman, cold, insensitive, robot-like creatures, so detached from this world that we might as well be dead.

What keeps us functioning in the world as normal beings once access to the full range of memories and imagination are no longer available are a combination of *practical memory* and the unconscious part of *historical memory*.

Practical memory gives us the continued ability to function logically and effectively when the other two legs of memory have been removed. I still remember most of the functional and personality basics of my life without a need to specifically recall the situations where I gained that knowledge or recall any metadata attached to them. This is *practical memory* in action. It's like the analogy of riding a bike. If you learnt that skill at some stage in your life it remains in your subconscious forever. You don't need to recall all the drama of learning to ride, any associated emotional metadata or connect to the whole 'ego' illusion to jump on a bike; it just happens. Riding off is a pure mindful moment, an action that is complete in itself without any excess content. Apply this analogy to all of life and remove the expectations for an emotional payback and this nicely reflects living in a *no-self* state.

Unconscious *historical memory* is the recall of past events only when required and no *emotional memory/metadata* comes with them. The fact I can write this book based on some of the events of my past illustrates that there is access to this historical information when it is required. For example, if my friend Phillip asked me about the time we spent together in Bangkok in 2017 I would know that we did meet up and also, I would be able to list what attractions we visited. This is a recollection I would classify as totally practical. Not to have access to this sort of information would start to fall into the dementia category. However, it all gets very hazy once I move beyond the basic memory recall and my description of Bangkok would be in line with Amy's:

I noticed how flat and lifeless it (memory) was – like colourless slides on an antique film.

Unless there is some requirement to access this historical information, it remains totally dormant and doesn't intrude into the present in any way. What need is there for it to do so?

So, in summary. It seems that as our identification with a self, an ego, a me - whatever you want to call it, happens the past and future (memory and imagination) fade and the control they have over so many of our attitudes and actions also diminishes leaving us free to observe life from the present moment, which is a state of natural **mindfulness** except the 'mind' bit has been removed. I think it is the natural playfulness of the mind that produces 'solid' thoughts resulting in the creation of everything we take as real and important. In the *now* moment, none of these has any true reality as they exist only in the sandpit of our imagination.

Ego Death

Chapter Fourteen:

Added 19 March 2019:

I came across a couple of articles online this morning while contemplating not much while overlooking the farm pond at my family's place in Thailand. These writings basically say the same things I have already covered in this book, but in a different way, so I thought I would share it with you. I always find it a slight comfort to read other people's take on the reality I experience as it makes it all seem more mainstream.

The first extract is from Wikipedia, which gives a broad overview of this concept of ego death, or loss of self as I have described it in this book.

Ego death and the related term "ego loss" have been defined in the context of mysticism by the religious studies scholar Daniel Mekur as "an imageless experience in which there is no sense of personal identity. It is the experience that remains possible in a state of extremely deep trance when the ego-functions of reality-testing, sense-perception, memory, reason, fantasy and self-representation are repressed [...] Muslim Sufis call it fana ('annihilation'), and medieval Jewish kabbalists termed it "the kiss of death".

Carter Phipps equates enlightenment and ego death, which he defines as "the renunciation, rejection and, ultimately, the death of the need to hold on to a separate, self-centered existence.

In Jungian psychology, Ventegodt and Merrick define ego death as "a fundamental transformation of the psyche. Such a shift in personality has been labelled an "ego death" in Buddhism or a psychic death by Jung.

In comparative mythology, ego death is the second phase of Joseph Campbell's description of The Hero's Journey, which includes a phase of separation, transition, and incorporation.[6] The second phase is a phase of self-surrender and ego-death, where-after the hero returns to enrich the world with his discoveries.

In psychedelic culture, Leary, Metzger & Alpert (1964) define ego death or ego loss as they call it, as part of the (symbolic) experience of death in which the old ego must die before one can be spiritually reborn. They define Ego loss as "... complete transcendence – beyond words, beyond space-time, beyond self. There

are no visions, no sense of self, no thoughts. There are only pure awareness and ecstatic freedom".

Several psychologists working on psychedelics have defined ego-death. Alnaes (1964) defines ego-death as "[L]oss of ego-feeling.". Stanislav Grof (1988) defines it as "a sense of total annihilation [...] This experience of "ego death" seems to entail an instant merciless destruction of all previous reference points in the life of the individual [...] [E]go death means an irreversible end to one's philosophical identification with what Alan Watts called "skin-encapsulated ego". The psychologist John Harrison (2010) defines "[T]emporary ego death [as the] loss of the separate self[,] or, in the affirmative, [...] a deep and profound merging with the transcendent other. Johnson, Richards & Griffiths (2008), paraphrasing Leary et al. and Grof define ego death as "temporarily experienc[ing] a complete loss of subjective self-identity.

I have edited this entry to remove various reference links so if you want to see the entire article then this is the link: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Ego_death

My comments:

Although the various references in this entry basically relate to the same outcome that I have described in this book, the methods for achieving them are varied. I have heard of the use of psychedelics to achieve altered states with a spiritual targeted goal but I didn't know that this was an academically studied as an option to altered ego states. The obvious problem with taking drugs to achieve a quick ego death (loss of self) is that:

(a) the shock of suddenly experiencing reality without the ego is not a state I would want to dive into without extensive preparation. I wrote about the fear I went through over an extended period in the chapter *The Transition* and slow and steady is my recommendation for ego loss.

This experience of ego death seems to entail an instant merciless destruction of all previous reference points in the life of the individual.

This quote is from Stanislav Grof and he is referring to situations *when using psychedelics or various powerful non-pharmacological experiential techniques*. It is his *instant* reference that is the aspect of this that might be so dangerous. An *instant destruction of all previous reference points* is one scary trip closer to madness for the unprepared rather than some blissful spiritual outcome. I wrote about exactly this misconception previously in the book saying

".....without memories, the emotions attached to them, separate body consciousness and no relationship with the person attached to your name or in

the mirror? ' Try that one at midnight and you might get a feeling for how frightening these events were.

(b) of course, once the drug effects wear off you are back in everyday reality. The aim is to achieve a permanent natural state of ego-less life and you can't spend a lifetime in a drug induced fantasyland.

The final ego-death state based on the psychedelic culture, is described above as ... *complete transcendence – beyond words, beyond space-time, beyond self. There are no visions, no sense of self, no thoughts. There are only pure awareness and ecstatic freedom.* Having read my words to this point you will relate to all of these aspects as I have written about them extensively particularly in what I call Stage Three. The one outcome I can't relate to is the *ecstatic freedom*, as I have no experience of the ecstatic. Freedom in a way yes, because the ego doesn't drive my actions but no emotional high as a result.

Daniel Mezur describes ego death/loss as *the experience that remains possible in a state of extremely deep trance*, which in my interpretation could be in deep meditation. The extraordinary outcome I live is that what Mezur writes as an outcome of this trance state, being *ego-functions of reality-testing, sense-perception, memory, reason, fantasy and self-representation are repressed*. I can list those functions as being absent but not as a repressed but just totally absent. Repression is an over layering of some discipline such as meditation or mindfulness to act as a more powerful influence to suppress ego tendencies. I find that once you settle into a *self-less* existence the removal of the ego is at such a fundamental level that there is no over layering because there is nothing left to repress. The destruction of the strongest aspects of the self/ego is complete and there is no ability to re-energise it even if one wanted to.

The second article I have taken is from a website called hackspirit.com If you want to read the original you can find it [HERE](#). I have added many comments, not to attack the words of this author but because I have a different view on some things he writes about based on my actual experience and so I include them for you to make your own judgement.

Ego Death: 7 stages to the obliteration of the self.

There are some of us who live free—they see life as it is, and move through it and react to it in the way that is best for them. But for many of us, we are controlled by our ego, or our sense of self and identity. The ego holds us back because it puts a lens of duality over the real world. Instead of seeing life as it is, the ego tends to divide concepts into two opposite sides: left and right, right and wrong, love and hate, peace and war.

These divisions bring suffering to our lives. Instead of seeing everyone as equals, the ego forces us to categorize others, making greater and lesser people, experiences, thoughts, places, and emotions. The ego forces us to think that some things are wrong and some are right, thus breeding hatred and resentment amongst humanity.

But there are some of us who live without these artificial borders, and these are those who have experienced what is known as the ego death. Before we talk about what an ego death is, we need to understand the ego first.

What is the ego?

The ego is an identity of our own construction. It's our beliefs we have about our personality, talents, abilities, life experience, relationships etc. It's the mental construct of our 'self'. While it can appear that the ego is static, it isn't. Rather, it is active, dynamic and changing. After all, we're changing as we learn about ourselves and have more life experiences.

The kinds of thoughts that contribute to the ego are:

"I'm bad at math".

"I'm smart"

"I'm emotionally mature".

"I am better than most people at writing".

The ego hides behind "I" and "me" in those thoughts and statements about our identity.

The ego is difficult to see. It appears as real because it's our attachment to descriptions of our identity – and we use our ego to understand the world. In fact, it's quite difficult for the unaware person to discern the difference between what is ego and what is really them.

The Ego Death

The death of the ego isn't truly a death, as the ego will always be a part of us.

Tony: No, I don't believe that the ego will always be a part of us. In Stage Three, most of the ego/self has been dissolved to the extent that there is no longer a recognisable individual person, what Alan Watts calls 'skin-encapsulated ego'. I believe that the final becoming of Truth requires the complete removal of the ego/self, which is a concept I discuss with Bernadette's help in my chapter [Where to Next?](#)

Instead, it's more like a transcendence; we evolve beyond the shackles of our ego and leave it behind, learning to control our lives without its influence.

When we leave behind the ego in ego death, we return to our True Nature and learn to live beyond the confines of the ego's dualistic reality.

But this experience can be both beautiful and terrifying, depending on how ready the individual is to let go of their ego. For some, this complete loss of identity can be the most petrifying experience ever, because the ego's defence mechanism kicks in to keep itself attached to its person.

Tony: See [The Transition](#)

But for others, the death of the ego is just another step on a lifelong path of spirituality.

Here are the 7 steps of the ego death:

1) The Spiritual Awakening

The first step is when we wake up. We leave behind our daily routines and our everyday desires and ask ourselves:

What am I here? What is my purpose? What am I supposed to do?

Tony: Maybe this is a red pill moment

This awakening occurs when we begin to feel that we have a void in our life that we cannot fill. In many cases, this awakening comes with depression and feelings of being lost.

2) The Dark Night

This is the deepest part of our depression during the Spiritual Awakening, our lowest point.

Tony: Stage Two

We are in complete despair, and we know that something has to happen in our life, something drastic and meaningful, but we don't understand what that something has to be.

We become isolated from others and even ourselves.

3) Exploration

We start to try filling that void with things we might have one found silly or ludicrous. We experiment with the mystic arts, astrology, energy healing, and practices that focus on connecting the mind, body, and soul.

Tony: Or endless garden or house projects – anything to keep engaged.

We branch out with our spirituality beyond the normal mainstream religions to try to understand what we are feeling.

4) Glimpse of Enlightenment

And finally, we experience our first, small glimpse of enlightenment, also known as “satori”. We take a look into our True Nature during our exploration and become terrified of this experience.

This terror can push us away from further exploration or make us want to find out more.

Tony: [The Transition](#)

5) Soul Growth

This step can take months if not years, and this is when our soul begins to mature. We develop the ability to understand what spiritual practices work for us and which have no effect on us.

This depends on the individual; some beliefs might resonate with you, while others won't touch your soul at all.

As our soul begins to mature, we focus on the practices that hone our patience, discipline, and focus most successfully.

6) The Surrendering

Now we let go. We have become intimately familiar with our soul and our ego, and we surrender everything that is not part of our True Nature, but things created by our ego.

We let go of the patterns that limit us, hold us back, and let our souls grow by bypassing our ego.

For this step to be most effective, we must trust what we do not know and let go of the fears brought to us by our ego.

Tony: This sounds like a planned decision doesn't it. 'Today and from now on I am going to let go'. I never found it like this. Everything let go of me and it was that unexpected and unplanned nature of the transformation that caused me so many problems. I had no desire to let go. I was expecting to get 'more' of things not less!

7) Awareness and End

The last step is the end of the line. We have explored, grown, and surrendered, and thus evolved beyond our ego.

We understand what we were searching for in the beginning, and we see the illusions for what they are: illusions.

The Truth is in us now, and we know that the ego should not define who we are; the ego should exist simply as a tool to be used whenever needed.

Tony: The ego will be lost forever in the process as I experience it and can not be recreated on an as needed basis. Life is lived totally effectively completely outside the requirement to base anything on an 'I' or 'me.'

Who We Are is something so much greater.

The Positives and Negatives of Ego Death

Ego death can be one of the most beautiful experiences in your life. It can bring you new understanding and new approaches to life.

However, with the ego death, you'll lose the security of who you truly are, which can be frightening for some. You'll be intimately in touch with your intuitive self.

So, let's be clear, there are positives and negative effects to losing your ego. Here are some of them:

Negatives

- 1) You'll see yourself for who you are and you won't be protected by your ego. This can be frightening and uncomfortable.
- 2) You might experience feelings and emotions that you've been hiding from for years.
- 3) You'll find yourself as a different person, with no insecurities (and securities) of your ego. If you've been using your ego for protection, this can be shattering.
- 4) It can make you feel disappointed in who you've been.
- 5) It can change you psychologically, and change your thought patterns.

Tony: I don't agree with many of these negatives as they are written, not the outcomes themselves but the reference to feelings associated with a loss of ego/self:

1. The loss of ego can certainly be 'frightening and uncomfortable' but the cause is not because 'you see yourself for who you are', it's because nothing steps up to fill the space where your identity once was. You can't see yourself for who you are because the 'you' has faded and nothing remains.

2. You won't be accessing hidden feelings and emotions because these are attributes attached to the ego or self. Take that away and all of those triggered responses disappear. Without historical memory and metadata to light the fuse of feelings and emotions nothing explodes in the now moment.

3. You will certainly find yourself a different person although I find there are still aspects of personality related influences such as insecurities that are still around, although much reduced in their power to influence. I suspect these will continue to fade over time as the self-less state expands – see the chapter [Where to Next](#).

4. No, you won't feel disappointed with who you've been. Disappointment and who **you've** been are both ego centric illusions.

5. You will certainly be physiologically altered, that's the point of the whole exercise like it or not. Nothing in your life will change you in the way this voyage of discovery will. The change in your thought patterns will be that they stop becoming patterns. Thoughts are no longer the driving force they once were but lifeless imaginings that can be picked up, looked at more closely and played with or ignored.

Positives

1) You can experience positive feelings in an extreme volume.

Tony: This whole positive/negative category is a distraction from the actual outcome. So much is written about the whole supposed blissful, positive results of this process. Unfortunately, the ego itself is required to be active to enjoy all these positive feelings, which as this has now been removed results in a balancing of swings between all the emotional responses to input. Responses are what they are to best deal with the situation in the now. Feelings don't seem to be part of the requirement in an ego-death environment.

2) You will see yourself for who you really are. It will help you see what you don't like about yourself and what you can change to make yourself a better person.

Tony: No. You won't see anything at all about yourself. That is an ego driven thinking concept – **you** aren't seen at all so how can you evaluate the likes and dislikes to make changes. It doesn't mean that you become totally passive, as I have discussed – no zombies, but the determination of action in most things seems to come as a result of a natural flow of outcomes rather than a formal self-examination.

3) You'll experience emotions that you are not able to feel normally because of the ego. You'll be able to get in touch with your whole being.

Tony: Emotions relate entirely to the moment and have very limited power to affect what you do in order to generate them. They are an outcome of natural action, not necessarily the initiator of that action. You might find, as I have, that specific emotions are very insignificant compared to an ego existence.

4) You'll change the way you view the world. You won't be clouded by your ego's insecurities and desires.

Tony: Yes. Totally true and one of the most significant changes to my outlook on life.

5) You'll experience feelings that you haven't felt since you were a child. It will allow you to experience a pure mind.

Tony: What does that mean? Does a child experience a range of feelings different from an adult? A pure mind – thought winds down and eventually the mind as we would normally categorise it will no longer exist. Anyway enough from me.

How to experience ego death

According to yoga, there are 4 ways to experience ego death:

1) The path of action.

Karma Yoga believes that by doing the right action that's aligned with your values can result in the dissolution of the ego. It's all about making your actions aligned with your spiritual self. This could be living a life of service for others.

2) Bhakti Yoga.

This is apparently difficult to grasp for westerners. It's about cultivating the highest love for God. This is usually achieved through meditation, prayer or chanting.

3) Jnana Yoga.

This is also termed *The Path of Knowledge*. This is usually focused on exploring questions such as "Who am I" and "What are these thoughts?"

4) Raja Yoga.

This is the path of meditation. This is all about concentration practice, such as on your breath, body parts and objects. It's about gaining control over mind and emotions.

Psychedelics

According to many people, psychedelics are the fastest and most consistent way to have an ego-death experience. However, this comes with dangers as well.

In a lecture in 1976, Ram Dass said that “psychedelic chemicals have a capacity to cut through places where you are attached and clinging, to set them aside and show you a possibility. The problem is that they don't allow you to become the possibility, they only show you the possibility.

According to scientific findings, taking LSD may result in brain regions becoming heavily interconnected, which could explain increased feelings of ego dissolution.

In fact, [Timothy Leary](#), who was an American psychologist well known for advocating the exploration of the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs under controlled conditions, described the death of the ego as the first phase of a psychedelic trip, in which there is a “complete transcendence” of the self.

He defined ego death as “complete transcendence—beyond words, beyond space-time, beyond self. There are no visions, no sense of self, no thoughts. There is only pure awareness and ecstatic freedom.”

[In Vice](#), they have an article on interviews with various people trying to experience ego death using psychedelics. Most people describe it as frightening, but liberating at the same time.

Researchers say that psychedelic drugs quieten the “default mode network” of the brain. [The default mode network](#) is known to be involved in many different functions in the brain – and is crucial for the neurological basis of the self.

Timothy Leary says that there are 5 stages to the psychedelic experience and different dosages of psychedelics will help you get there.

The first two stages are mild and require lower doses of psychedelics.

Level 4 or 5 are apparently associated with an ego death and requires insane doses to pull it off.

What isn't usually talked about is the negative experiences people have from these high doses. Heightened anxiety, paranoia, and induced PTSD are common side effects. What's even more frightening is that these side effects can stay with you after the experience is over.

[According to Vice](#), “depersonalization can set in, and never leave, after ego death.”

Vice also mentions a story of a 22-year-old American who, after experiencing an ego death, started to believe that he was developing psychosis because nothing in the world made sense and nothing had a point.

TONY: *I have included the words of the guy mentioned above because it describes a loss of self, I also describe in detail in the chapter Metadata and the Mind. The difference is that I achieved a gradual acceptance of this state while for someone who falls into it quickly it can be destructive:*

'I had to look at myself in the mirror for a long time so I'd know what my face looks like,' he explains. "I had to tell myself my name over and over again until I started to develop a sense of identity. I saw how temporary this world is and I struggled to find a reason to live.'

In other words, don't believe the hype. Spiritual awakenings, especially those induced from psychedelics, can be very ugly.

So, while people claim that "ego death" offers solutions to life problem's, you might want to be careful with how you approach it if you choose to use psychedelics.

Tony: *I certainly don't recommend this as a way to experience ego-death. The process is totally uncontrolled, the results are unknown and the effects can ripple out into your life in ways you hadn't intended. I prefer to rely on the 'divine grace' or whatever you want to call that inner guidance to set a timescale, which might take you to the edge sometimes, but never over it.*

As we mentioned above, our egos can't literally be destroyed. Instead, it's more fruitful to learn how to control our ego and make friends with it.

Below we go over a different strategy promoted by the likes of [Eckhart Tolle](#) and Osho on how to help yourself let go of the ego.

How to let go of the grip of the ego: Eckhart Tolle describes the natural way

According to Eckhart Tolle, ego is anything that gives you a sense of identity – and this comes from what you think about yourself and what other people say about you.

One way to think about ego is as a protective heavy shell, such as the kind some animals have, like a big beetle. This protective shell works like armour to cut you off from other people and the outside world. What I mean by shell is a sense of separation: Here's me and there's the rest of the universe and other people. The ego likes to emphasize the 'otherness' of others.

The big problem with the ego is that the ego loves to strengthen itself through negativity and complaining. When you listen to the ego and its negativity, it starts to control you and how you

behave. According to Eckhart Tolle, when this happens, *you don't have thoughts; the thoughts have you.*

So, what's the key to not letting the ego controlling you? Eckhart Tolle says it's all about observing the mind and becoming aware of what kind of thoughts you habitually think, especially negative ones.

When you do this, you might suddenly realize that you have been thinking the same thoughts over and over without really knowing it.

Eckhart Tolle says that awareness is the first step to becoming free of the ego:

Awareness is the beginning of becoming free of the ego because then you realize that your thoughts—and the negative emotions they produce—are dysfunctional and unnecessary.

Of course, the question is: How do we become an observer of the mind to achieve this?

Becoming the observer simply means taking a step back from your mind and becoming aware of your thinking patterns and how you're responding to things.

Tony: The simply reference must relate only to the concept of taking a step back from your mind, because the reality is that this is anything but a simple exercise as anyone who has tried to quieten the mind will attest to.

Below we've found a passage from Osho that explains exactly how to go about it.

Tony: Osho was also known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh who was a controversial Indian spiritual teacher born 1931 and dying 1990. This quote works in the context of this topic so I have left it as part of the article.

How to become an observer of your mind and liberate yourself from your ego

Become an observer of the currents of thought that flow through your consciousness. Just like someone sitting by the side of a river watching the river flow by, sit by the side of your mind and watch. Or just as someone sits in the forest and watches a line of birds flying by, just sit and watch. Or the way someone watches the rainy sky and the moving clouds, you just watch the clouds of thoughts moving in the sky of your mind. The flying birds of thoughts, the flowing river of thoughts in the same way, silently standing on the bank, you simply sit and watch. It is the same as if you are sitting on the bank, watching the thoughts flowing by. Don't do anything, don't interfere, don't stop them in any way. Don't repress in any way. If there is a thought coming don't stop it, if it is not coming don't try to force it to come. You are simply to be an observer....

In that simple observation you will see and experience that your thoughts and you are separate – because you can see that the one who is watching the thoughts is separate from the thoughts, different from them. And you become aware of this, a strange peace will envelop you because you will not have any more worries. You can be in the midst of all kinds of worries but the worries will not be yours. You can be in the midst of many problems but the problems will not be yours. You can be surrounded by thoughts but you will not be the thoughts...

And if you become aware that you are not your thoughts, the life of these thoughts will begin to grow weaker, they will begin to become more and more lifeless. The power of your thoughts lies in the fact that you think they are yours. When you are arguing with someone you say, "My thought is". No thought is yours. All thoughts are different from you, separate from you. You just be a witness to them.

Once again, words that I have written in this book before reading quotes like this are totally supported by other people's observations. The process is as it is no matter what the context of the understanding.

My final contribution of someone else's work (ha ha) to this ego-death topic is this extract from an interview given by Eckhart Tolle:

Free Yourself from Your Ego Armor

Eckhart Tolle, author of [A New Earth](#), explains how to break through the shell that separates you from your true self.

Vanity and pride are what most of us tend to think of when we think of ego, but ego is much more than an overinflated sense of self. It can also turn up in feelings of inferiority or self-hatred because ego is any image you have of yourself that gives you a sense of identity—and that identity derives from the things you tell yourself and the things other people have been saying about you that you've decided to accept as truth.

One way to think about ego is as a protective heavy shell, such as the kind some animals have, like a big beetle. This protective shell works like armour to cut you off from other people and the outside world. What I mean by shell is a sense of separation: Here's me and there's the rest of the universe and other people. The ego likes to emphasize the "otherness" of others.

This sense of separation is an intrinsic part of the ego. The ego loves to strengthen itself by complaining—either in thoughts or words—about other people, the situation you find yourself in, something that is happening right now but "shouldn't be," and even about yourself. For example, when you're in a long line at the supermarket, your mind might start complaining how slow the checkout person is, how he should be doing this or doing that, or he failed to do anything at all—including packing the bag of the person ahead of you correctly.

When this happens, the ego has you in its grip. You don't have thoughts; the thoughts have you—and if you want to be free, you have to understand that the voice in your head has created them and

irritation and upset you feel is the emotional response to that voice. Only in this way can you be present to the truer world around you and see the golden shade in a pound of pears on the scanner, or the delight of a child in line who begs to eat them. The trick, of course, is to work to free ourselves from this armour and from this voice that is dictating reality.

Tony: Repeating an example of this I wrote about in [Now Mindfulness](#).

Let me give you another very simple example to illustrate how reactions to life situations have changed for me. We recently drove to Udon Thani, a city one hour from our home in rural Thailand. It is a busy traffic-clogged place, as many Thai urban areas are and we hit several red traffic lights on the way to our destination. My before the reaction to so many red traffic lights might have been frustration, anger, rants against the government for not coordinating them and who knows what else! The alternative is what I now naturally experience, which is no reaction at all. Internally I feel no different if the lights are red or green. I observe and..... nothing.

The big change between this and my meditation period is that at that time I could engage the stillness of meditation and end up with much the same non-response. However, that required a 'manual' engagement - the acknowledgement of a situation and the application of a trained response - quieting the mind and blanking out the negative thought processes that might arise. That conscious process doesn't happen now. The appropriate response is an automatic one and I just watch it unfold. A red traffic light needs no reaction - nothing changes if I get angry or not. The light will do what it is going to do in complete isolation to my response to the situation. Which scenario do you think works better and is healthier for my overall state of being?

Observe Your Mind

The first foundational step is to become aware of what kind of thoughts you habitually think, especially negative thoughts: irritation, anger, impatience and perhaps even some kind of sadness. You might, for example, complain about yourself, how useless you are. If you start to hear these repetitive thoughts, then you will suddenly realize, "I've been thinking these same thoughts again and again almost every day without really knowing it."

Distinguish Between the Voice of Ego and the Actual Situation

Awareness is the beginning of becoming free of the ego because then you realize that your thoughts—and the negative emotions they produce—are dysfunctional and unnecessary. For example, let's go back to the supermarket line. As you stand waiting, you aren't actually irritated because it's taking a long time to get through to the checkout, which is the situation. You are irritated by what your mind is telling you *about* the situation—which is that all this waiting is bad and a waste of your time. But you could actually be enjoying that moment if you say, "This is simply

what is. There's nothing I can do about it, so why not breathe in deeply and look around and enjoy the world around me?"

Let Go of Limiting Stories

Sometimes the danger is not even pessimistic thought. If, for instance, you have been let go from your job, you might so resist being negative that you say, "It's a great thing that I lost my job!" That kind of wilful optimism is not necessary. We hold on to the fairy tale of supposed happiness—that we should be happy. But this keeps you stuck where you are. Instead, try to describe *only* what is happening, without judgment: I do not have a job. I must look for one.

Bring In Your Awareness

When you see the difference between your voice and the reality of the situation, that's the beginning of awakening. This is often a moment—a flash that sizzles and disappears. Initially you still lose yourself again, and the old thoughts arise, but gradually, you gain awareness, and the dysfunctional thoughts subside. It's a gradual transition, this bringing in of your awareness, because the ego doesn't want to change. It doesn't want to disappear, so it will give you plenty of reasons why you cannot be present.

Lay Down Your Weapons

Your challenge will be to become more aligned internally with the present moment. Fighting with your ego by will just makes it stronger. By declaring war on it, you make an enemy. A simple example: You wake up in the morning, and it's raining and grey, and the mind says, "What a miserable day," and this is not a pleasant thought. You likely feel some emotion: dread, disappointment, unhappiness. You suddenly realize that your judgment of what kind of day it will be is based on a mental habit, an unconscious default. That simple awareness creates space for a new thought to emerge. You can look again out the window without that preconception and just see the sky. It's grey. There's some sunlight filtering through the sky. There are, perhaps, raindrops falling. It's not actually miserable at all. It has a certain beauty. Then suddenly, you're free. You're no longer imposing something on reality, and you're free to enjoy what, previously, you had rejected.

To learn more about the ego, overcoming adversity and creating inner peace and meaning in your life visit EckhartTolleTV.com.

Read more: <http://www.oprah.com/oprahs-lifeclass/eckhart-tolle-on-how-to-free-yourself-from-your-ego-armor#ixzz5ibwGm5IS>

I hope this new chapter has added some interesting possibilities to your research about this topic. I get bursts of interest to add to the book so we will see what happens next.

How was this book written?

Chapter Fifteen:

I have been working on this book for more than two years in a very on and off sort of way. It is a story where the words appear in their own time rather than anything I consciously do. I can sit at the computer and sometimes there is something to share and at other times there's not. What appears is literally as new to me as it might be for you as I don't think about the words and each burst of writing has an energy of its own directing the topic.

I have learnt so much from this exercise that even if no one saw this document, the development of it has been totally worthwhile from my point of view. I only share here what I have directly experienced, not as an intellectual exercise in philosophy but as an insight into the current reality I live and some of the challenges I went through to arrive at this point.

I don't set myself up as a teacher with any set of practices to follow to replicate my path even if you wanted to. I mostly have no idea of how or why the changes that have occurred have done so and this book is presented only as a description of one person's journey of discovery.

In editing these words, I notice that I mix up the use of 'I' and *you* sometimes. In many of these instances, it wasn't my intention to lecture *you* or take the role of a teacher. I think this has happened because I don't have a strong grasp of the concept *me*, so I often default to 'you' as a result.

Tony

In Conclusion

For someone who has stuck with the book to this point and has had no personal connection to anything, I have written this has probably been a waste of time. I can't offer you a set of instructions on how to find the Truth because I have no idea myself. Mine was a very particular set of circumstances and to my conscious self, it was all a bit of a mess

My advice is that I do think that if you are at a pre-red pill time in your life then at some stage you should start by taking up an organised discipline to get you established in Stage One. Use the book as a basis for gauging the outcomes offered by whatever group you choose, and please discount any fast-track, big bang enlightenment promises. I believe it is more likely that you will become a traveller engaged on a long-term journey with changes and milestones happening over time and not explosive outcomes where your teacher stares into your eye one day and boom.... the Truth.

For those reading who might knowingly or unknowingly have taken a red pill, then I hope some aspects of the path I have covered will resonate and make sense of what might otherwise be worrying when seen through the eyes of the *self*. I am nothing special and yet somehow, I have been guided through some rocky times to a state of reality, which makes a realisation of the Truth seem a little more realistic. True or false who can say? As far as my assessment of the outcome so far - is my experience of reality different? Yes. Does that represent a positive result? Yes, it does although not in a way I would have thought at an earlier time.

When my mother wrote her book *A Journey to Truth*, she hoped that:

perhaps it might be a guide and help for others who are passing through the same uncharted waters.

I am not sure if anyone other than me has used her book as a guide as it had very limited circulation. However, for one person, me, Amy's effort has been priceless because it led me to an understanding of a very strange set of personal changes that I wouldn't have comprehended otherwise.

My hope is that the words I have shared in my book and the insight into my journey, which honestly, I have no great desire to make public to the world, will maybe find another Tony Eastmead, and contribute to making those uncharted waters a little less daunting even if just for one other.

Thank you for reading

Tony