

## 7 Practices for Passionate and Inspired People who Suffer

You are grateful, kind, and you work hard... Still, fear and negativity plague your mind. Whether these nagging feelings started 60 years ago or just 6 weeks ago, it's time to make a quantum leap. Relief is within your reach—choose one practice each day for one week—and simply keep choosing.

### 1. Shift Your Mindset

Our suffering often stems from unconscious beliefs we've adopted along the way—beliefs that permeate our upbringing, society, and circumstances. These beliefs are so ingrained that our thoughts flow without question. We are prisoners and don't even know it.

Our thoughts are in alignment with our beliefs, including those rooted in our unconscious mind. However, if our beliefs (and subsequent thoughts) do not bring us peace, they do not serve us. In fact, these beliefs may not be ours at all.

*Practice: Consider where a thought originates—how far back can you trace the origin of its belief? Does it serve your freedom, joy, and help you live an authentic life?*

#### Case study

*"I invested three decades of my life to supporting my spouse and family. I gave up so much of my own life. Karma should provide me with an equal return on my investment." — Sharon*

Sharon is displaying typical cause and effect thinking. In order to shift her mindset, she could ask herself the following questions: Where did this idea of karma first come from? How long have I believed in the concept? Have I ever questioned this thought? Is it true in my life?

These questions are not meant to determine whether or not the belief and subsequent thoughts are universally true. This practice encourages Sharon to discover where her thoughts come from so that she has the option of adopting new beliefs, should she choose to do so.

Sharon could explore a new mindset—one where she questions where her beliefs and thoughts originate. What if karma was somebody else's belief? What if different people describe karma in different ways? What if a return on her "kindness investment" had no correlation to karma? What if Sharon was solely responsible for her own freedom? What if nobody owed her anything, and she adopted a new mindset in order to become free of the former belief-thought plague?

#### Advanced Practice

Adopt a new worldview.

## **2. Connect Through Empathy**

We have an incredible ability to separate ourselves from the world through unconscious judgment of ourselves or others, which only creates suffering. What if we took proactive steps to connect more fully with ourselves and the things, places, and people around us?

*Practice: I am that, too.*

While taking a walk, notice something you might describe as pleasant and say, “I am that, too.” Next, notice something you would describe as neutral—a pebble, perhaps—and say, “I am that, too.” Finally, become aware of something you judge as unpleasant and say, “I am that, too.” Notice how you feel when you are connecting—when we separate ourselves because of judgment, it often results in suffering.

### Advanced Practice

Silently do the same when you are in a group of people you know or when passing strangers. No matter what thoughts or judgments arise—pleasant or not—recite to yourself, “I am her/him, too.” Notice over time that your level of suffering decreases as your connection level increases.

## **3. Channel Your Energy for Good**

It’s easy to be positive and act kindly when we are experiencing the better-feeling emotions of joy, excitement, or trust. However, all emotions are valid. We can use the energy of *any* emotion for good, including anger, fear, or shame.

*Practice: Notice the next time you feel a seemingly negative emotion. Ask yourself—how may I use you for good? What do you want me to know? Count down from five and think of a productive action.*

### Advanced Practice

Notice the next time you feel anger while driving a vehicle. Count down from five and send out a productive wish. It could be something like “May you get to your destination safely,” even if your voice is raised. Over time, this practice drops from the head into the heart—and you may suffer less.

## **4. Engage in Conscious Breathing**

When our mind, body, or spirit is suffering, we tend to breathe more shallowly. By focusing our breath instead of mindlessly reacting to our surroundings or situation, we can loosen the tightness of suffering.

*Practice: Breathe in to the count of four, hold for two counts, and breathe out to the count of six. Repeat as many times as necessary.*

### Advanced Practice

Follow the flow of your breath. Notice the temperature of the air as you draw it in through your nose. Visualize the inhalation going down your throat to your lungs and expanding the abdomen. Follow the breath as it continues to lift the diaphragm and chest. Watch as the breath leaves your body.

## **5. Exercise Control Over Your Feelings**

Instead of allowing people or situations to dictate our feelings, we can make conscious choices about how we want to feel.

*Practice: Every day, write down three words that describe how you want to feel (e.g. connected, purposeful, enlivened).*

## **6. Begin a Success Journal**

We tend to think of success in terms of achieving wealth or fame. But what would happen if we redefine success? What if any accomplishment toward our aim—no matter how small—were considered a triumph? Any practice we actively participate in—even one conscious breath that day—brings us toward a place of less suffering.

*Practice: Record a daily entry in your success journal, no matter how small.*

## **7. Create Who You Desire to Become**

Each day, we have the opportunity to decide who we want to become. Visualizing the kind of people we desire to be is the first step towards becoming them.

*Practice: Write an on-going script as if you are the lead character in a two-act play. Act One is the present—begin where you are. Act Two is the future—write as if it were happening now. Each day, visualize who you desire to become and project it into the lead character of your show. Write your lines instead of following someone else's outline.*

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