

Intention



Article by Ralph Miller

Intention is something we take into the sacred moments of our life. It is the prayer that we offer with each breath we take. It is a reflection of who we are moment by moment. We can try to grab onto the thoughts about those feelings. We can try to reduce to words what it is we want and then create an intention to move towards those things ... but when we do the thing we felt behind the thought, many times it just doesn't translate into words. Real intentions are our will to act and do in a way that guides our souls through this universe. What should those intentions be? Can they lead us to contentment and peace?

There is a growing awareness about the sacred plant teacher ayahuasca. This medicine is an interface with nature herself and can help those who encounter it to overcome attachments that are not serving them. There are many people who intend to come and meet this teacher, and do. Others 'intend' to have an encounter with this plant and do not. Yet, either decision is a good one in that moment. The universe has a way of allowing for a freedom that is within a perfect timing. You can never be late and you can never be early. Our true intentions will always lead us to peace and freedom.

Happiness

Our lives are guided by a desire for happiness and contentment. In the last centuries western civilizations have shifted to materialism in a quest for happiness. We have drifted far away from the notion of inner contentment that one achieves despite material possessions or wealth. The idea of 'rising expectations' as an economic principal that relates to the notion of members of an economic class or culture who adopt an attitude of reaching further and further towards products and services that are obtainable and affordable. Plainly stated, the principle is that 'the more you have the more you want'. The media bombards us with messages that are geared towards desires and wants born out of cultural materialism that is running amok in our societies.

Expectations are not always about material things but they are often about something you want for yourself. Our cultural story is a survival story brought to us from eons of wars, striving and competition. We live in a world of every-man-for-themselves. This preoccupation that members of our cultures have about the perfect job, perfect body, stress free living, perfect relationship or perfect life is at its best a way that individuals are trying to better themselves. But at its worst is a reflection of a deep-seated group narcissistic psychosis.

The great thinkers of old such as Socrates who was the founder of Western philosophical thought, suggested that true contentment and happiness is only achieved when a person discovers peace within themselves irrespective of the circumstances of their life. Enduring happiness is the result of a deep knowing of oneself. Socrates said, "Everything the soul endeavors or endures under the guidance of wisdom ends in happiness."

Crisis or traumatic life events bring many to a search within. It doesn't matter how much money you have when you are confronted with a serious crisis. Crisis will always lead you to

search within. Many people approach their lives as well as their spiritual development with intention in their hearts. We each have goals and aspirations for our lives. We want to make our futures brighter and happier. In order to do that we first need to understand what makes us tick. What will make us truly happy? Is it money or things? Or is it something deeper?

I find some of the law of attraction self-help philosophy to be pretty disturbing, because it focuses on materialism as the means to happiness. Old habits die hard, I guess. But, the idea of using intention to 'attract' a new house, car or boat seems to me to be like some kind of a new currency that can be used to obtain 'things' instead of money. Now you don't have to pay for it, all you just have to do is wish for it. The point is, it's still about material things. With all the 'law of attraction' stuff, Santa is probably getting concerned about his job security.

Expectation vs. Intention

The understanding of letting go of expectations is an important aspect of the ayahuasca ceremony. The plant will always bring profound lessons to you, but you never know what that lesson will be. What this plant medicine does is offer a perspective of yourself and your world that is unique. Encounters with this plant will confront the ego in a way to disarm it. You know your own excuses and justifications and so does the plant. Those things are placed before you, for you to see. The perspective is fresh and new and free of resistance and justification. They say that the master lesson of this ayahuasca experience is about letting go.

Ayahuasca is a teacher plant. It teaches us to connect to the natural world. It is interesting because this business of expectations is not something that fits into the natural world. The plants do not expect to have the sunlight to nourish them. The birds do not expect to find a worm to eat; they just go eat a worm. Or they don't and they get a little hungrier. There is no currency. There are no material things that the natural world wants or requires in the same way as humans do.

Creating an intention about anything in our life can be tricky ground, because it can be just another way of having expectations. It may be a way of saying the same thing in a different way. Expectation creates an attachment between you and the thing that you want or expect; or 'intend'. And, attachment to anything is like putting a piece of yourself into that thing. The things that we want; the situations in our life; our relationships; are all things that we need to let go of in order to be consolidated within ourselves. Consolidation within yourself means that you get to be fully YOU. There are not bits of you scattered into all the situations and things that are in your life. Consolidation is about personal freedom.

If we can't or won't let go, then that situation, person or thing that must change or happen in the way that we want, we are subject to the ramifications of the outcome whether we like it or not. It may work the way you want and it may not, but you have attached to only one of these outcomes. If it works out ... then great. But, if it does not work out the result is profound disappointment that disempowers us.

The reason it works that way is this. Let's say there is a complicated situation in your life that you are attached to. You need that situation to have an outcome in a certain way or you will be devastated. You make all kinds of 'intentions' for it to be the way that you need it to be. You pray that it will be that way! You have attached to a certain outcome that you want to have happen. It must be this way or it's going to be really bad for you. When you

attach to that certain outcome you are in effect creating the 'possibility' of that outcome's polar opposite ... that it will not work out the way you 'intended'. Your attachment to one side of the equation has allowed for the possibility of a negative outcome on the other side of the equation. Your biorhythms are off. Bad hair day ... whatever. It just doesn't work out the way you intended! You can only look to your attachment as the thing that has set you up for this.

The answer is to just let go! I always look at it this way, "You've mastered everything else, why don't you just let go?"

The Wisdom of Happiness

What wisdom can guide us to happiness that Socrates spoke of? Much of the Socratic philosophies are a mystery. Most of what we know was brought through his student Plato. One thing left to us in his own words was that there is a wisdom that can lead us to contentment. I surmise that part of the wisdom of happiness is threefold.

First, letting go and detaching from outcomes in one's life that 'have to happen' is one of them. There is an attitude one can adopt of making every outcome perfect. The wisdom of the Taoist sages would instruct us to walk a path free of commentary about the things around us that we could want or not want. Wanting too much creates attachment. Not wanting too much also creates attachment. If you truly let go ... you free yourself from comment or judgment about whatever the outcome.

The potential we have in our lives is collapsed as soon as we attach to something. Difficult situations have unique ways of resolving. With attachment, the spontaneity of the universe is lost. The possibility of it going either way is no more. Novelty is gone. Maybe the other path would have opened a whole new world of possibility. Your freedom from attachments will make every potential possible again.

The second wisdom I would like to suggest is that we need to learn to live in the real world. We need to learn to live in the present moment. It is common to hear people say when speaking about something they want, "If only ..." or alternatively, "I wish". I find this interesting because 'If only' has to do with the past. It is the regret of something that is lost. It is pining away for something that could have worked out differently but didn't. 'I wish' is about the future. Hoping for the right lotto numbers, the right partner, the grass that is greener over there. It is the ego's attempt to stretch into a future that will never arrive.

True gratitude for our breath and our life will help us to be in the moment that we have right now. When you are thankful for everything in your life you are present. When you notice the beauty of every person you encounter, you see them in a brand new way. Living in the moment is real and it means you are awake. The past and future are a dream that will never be.

The third wisdom is to create true intention in your life. Intention is only your will to do or to act. The bird getting the worm simply goes over to the worm and pulls it out of the earth. You can make an intention to let go of attachment. You can intend to live in the present moment. You can intend to love, because it is an act of your will. You can intend to be free ... and free you will be. Every possible outcome is perfect ... it really is!

*"His followers said to him, 'When will the kingdom come?' 'It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here it is,' or 'Look, there it is.' Rather, the father's kingdom is already spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."
- Jesus, Gospel of Thomas*

Most religious philosophies teach of a heaven. The idea of a heaven that is waiting for us when we die is kind of scary to me, because what if it isn't. I would like to suggest that heaven is our responsibility and that is not a place that is far off into the future. The potential of heaven is all around us. My wife Anna taught me that heaven is a place that is here now on earth. All we have to do is to see it. It is a decision of gratitude, letting go and peace with all things. I like that idea.

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