

Love is granting another the space to be the way they are and the way they aren't.

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Life, Living and Winning the Game

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Living is really pretty simple. Living happens right now; it doesn't happen back then, and it doesn't happen out there. Living is not the story of your life. Living is the process of experiencing right now.

Thinking about right now, figuring it out, perceiving it, arguing, reading about or believing anything about right now – none of these produce any certainty about living.

When you get beyond the symbols and beliefs about now, beyond thinking about it, beyond efforting or working at it, when you get even beyond merely feeling it, when you get all the way up to observing it, being with it, and finally up to totally experiencing it, the uncertainty about living goes away, because you know the truth in the only way in which a being ever knows the truth – by direct experience.

Actually, it is possible to open up the space for people to transcend life, to transcend these things that get in the way of being here now, so that they can experience being here now for themselves.

Let's take a look at the nature of now. What I've noticed with the people I've interacted with is that everyone who truly experiences right here, right now, actually sees that it's all perfect exactly the way it is. When I am being myself, nothing more and nothing less – when I am doing exactly what I am doing – when I am allowing what is so around me to be exactly like it is – when I am being right here instead of where I am going – when I am observing it all just as it is without adding any judgments or evaluations or comparing it, then I observe that it is perfect. (For right now, - not that it should stay that way.) A thing is perfect when it is the way it is – when it is itself. To take away or add to that would produce a flaw. Therefore it is all perfect because, in terms of experiencing, that is to say, living, what is so right now is what is so right now. Truly, that is the whole realization. There is nothing startling about that. What is, is and what isn't, isn't. So what! – That's precisely what people say when they

find out. Enthusiastically – So What! There's an enormous freedom in experiencing that. When you can really observe and experience that, it transforms your ability to experience living. Read more...

The ball game might seem to be over at that point because you now would know the truth – what is, is and what is not – is not. You could just sit there and dig the experience of it and let it be the way it is and it is perfect. The problem is you've only handled the truth – you still have the lie to handle.

Actually, not very many of us are paying attention to living and therefore we don't get very much out of it. There's something else besides living, the thing most of us have our attention on. And that's the thing called life – the drama, the story, the illusion, the lie.

Life

Life is really a totally different thing from living. Living is just what's happening right now, right this instant, and that's all perfect. Perfect means what is – is, and what isn't – isn't, and that's flawless.

Life is a bag full of stuff. It is composed of something that might be represented by all the departments in a university and all of the sections, specialties, and the subspecialties. And you have to go beyond that and get into things that aren't handled in the universities – and even into church and playing poker – all of those things.

Once you have realized yourself, once you are enlightened, you still have life to handle, and life is an uncertain machine. For most people, the practice of life is a process of self-invalidation. If you go fishing and you don't catch any fish, the next time you go fishing, it's not as much fun – you've lost some enthusiasm. If you go out again and don't catch any fish, your enthusiasm lessens and pretty soon you'd rather stay in bed.

Essentially that's the way people are about life. They'd rather stay in bed than play life. There are things like wars, and political scandals, and the job to go to every day, and your marriage, and the project you're working on, and your family, and getting along with people, and being able to communicate to someone who really doesn't want to get it, all of those things. Each one of those things is like a fishing trip with no fish. After a while you lose your enthusiasm. Let's take a look inside life and see if we can get some certainty about it.

Life Is Very Simple

Actually life is very simple. What keeps it from appearing to be simple, is that it comes in a lot of different forms. You get a form called a chair and a form called

a body and you get a form called a rug, and a form called a railing and a microphone, and a pair of pants, and shoes, and you get speakers and curtains and that's a whole bunch of different stuff. There are rules about chairs and bodies, and rules about rugs and about railings and microphones and shoes. You've got all these things to figure out and you just know you can't handle it all. If they would only leave you alone with chairs, instead of bringing those rugs in. If they just let you do your thing, in your own little corner of the universe, everything would be fine.

The problem is, that idea only comes from going out into the universe and not getting any fish. That gives you the idea that the answer is to not fish. In fact however, the fundamental rules for chairs and the fundamental rules for everything are exactly the same. There are some central rules in life. Once you have personally uncovered those rules for yourself, life is no longer a mystery.

Life Is A Game

The most fundamental rule about life, the thing that most people overlook, is that life is a game. It annoys people to hear that life is a game, because they know that when they got up this morning it didn't feel like a game. And besides which, war isn't a game, and of course many things obviously are not games.

The truth is that all of life is a game. Games have various degrees of consequences and war games have very heavy consequences. The consequences of getting up in the morning and not feeling like getting up are heavy too. To have to go through life when you don't want to do it, to have to go to work, to have to do your job, to have to be married to that person you are married to, to not be able to be married to the person that you want – all that is heavy, with big consequences. The point is you lose your ability to play the game, to master the game, when you forget that a game is a game. In order to master life, we need to recover the realization that life is truly a game.

Let's take a look at games. If we're going to master life we need to know of what a game is composed. You don't have to figure out the rules for your marriage and your job and your interpersonal relationships and all the other games you play in life. If you understand the rules of the game, you will understand mastery of life.

First we have to start in a no – games – condition. The name of the no-games condition is living. You start playing a game from the position called living, where what is – is, and what isn't, isn't.

Rules Of The Game

To have a game you have to agree that something is more important than something else. There isn't any such thing as a game that does not include the notion that something is better than something else. Intrinsically, or livingly, nothing's better than anything else. But when you get out of livingness and move into life, you start with the notion that something's important.

To create that something's important requires agreement. For me to say that this chair is important is ridiculous. It's simply a chair. The whole issue of importance is ridiculous, except when you agree that it's important. The truth is that if everybody agrees that this chair is important, the chair becomes important – by agreement.

The second thing about a game is that what is to be important must be what isn't ... because if what is is important the game is over. Life is a process in which, wherever you are, that isn't it. It's got to be someplace else. Life is a game in which what isn't is more important or better than what is. You need to get these two things: A) that importances are created by agreement alone and that nothing is intrinsically important – things actually just are; B) that in order to have a game, where you are not or what you are not has got to be more important than where you are or what you are.

The real question is, where is the aliveness in the game? Where's the happiness? And the love? And the health and the full self-expression? The purpose of living is living. Your total purpose of living is living. That's the real purpose of life, but that's not the goal in the game. The goal in the game is always to win. And that's one of the things that helps you know where it is.

Goals In The Game

It is merely represented by the goal you set – your destination and time of reaching it. Some people think the goal is it: that if I get over here and I'm not over there anymore that I've reached it, because being over here was my goal. Actually, the goal is simply what you set up to represent it. That isn't it, that's just a representation, it's the way you get to play the game. The representation is anything you agree on to represent it.

Suppose you agreed that what you wanted to be was a fireman. Then it is represented by being a fireman. Now suppose you are halfway to this goal and you say, "You know something, I don't think I want to be a fireman. I think I'll be a policeman." And then you say, "No, I don't think I'll be a policeman, I think I'll be a chemist." At each moment, at each step, you have the opportunity to experience living. You have the opportunity to realize the purpose (not the goal) of the game which is livingness.

To master life you simply need to know what you want. There's nothing you should want. Whatever you want is fine. There's no intrinsically valuable importance. You don't have to find it. It's whatever you say it is. Wake up in the morning and make up a goal. It doesn't make any difference. Most of you are stuck with what you say you wanted. It's all right not to want what you wanted. You can want something new now.

Mastering Life

All you have to do is know where it is you want to go. It doesn't hurt to know where you are as well. Mastering life is a process of moving from where you are to where you want to be.

Let's summarize and see how simple this is:

Life is a game.

A game includes the notion of importances.

For something to be important, you have to agree that it's important.

Life involves the notion of importances. Importances are created by agreement or disagreement, and, in order to have a game, what's important has got to be what isn't, and in order to master life, all you have to do is to say what you want. The only complications are things that wither move you towards it, things which interfere with it or things which oppose it; forces or flows which are either moving with you, opposing you, or crossing you.

Handling Life's Complications – Flows

If you expand your purpose to include the flows in your life, you can rehabilitate your ability to be certain. What has cost us our certainty is having stopped to handle the cross flow, the counter flow, and sometimes even the helping flow.

My mother told me to do the things I now know are appropriate. But I couldn't do them when she told me to do them; I thought my mother wanted to dominate me. Had I been willing to look, I would have seen that my mother really wanted to be my mother. That's all. What my mother thought that mothers do was to tell their children what to do. She didn't care much whether I did it or not, as long as she felt good when she'd told me the right thing to do, when she'd done what she considered to be her job. If I had been wiser as a youngster, I would not have opposed my mother. But I spent almost my whole life - up until a few years ago - opposing her. In childhood I got stopped. I stopped my life in order to handle my mother. That caused me to fail at my own purposes. So I had a tremendous failed purpose in life. And with that in my life, I didn't want to go fishing

anymore. I had lost the game of life. And I had lost in the only way you could ever possibly lose; by stopping to handle a threat.

Life is outrageously simple. The only thing which adds to it is the complication of somebody assisting you, crossing you, or countering you. The instant you are willing to take responsibility for what counters you and what crosses you, and what assists you – when you expand your purpose in life to handle that – you have truly mastered life. What keeps us from doing that is that we are stuck in stopping the other flows.

Agreements

Now, I'd like to discuss agreements. The problem with agreements is that they go solid. Games go solid, agreements go solid. So if you are over here and you make over there more important than over here, then over there is more important than over here. So somehow you've got to get over there. And what a lot of us have done is just not to have acknowledged that overthere is where we said we wanted to be. We are standing over here saying, "Well, I did it my way!" which makes us very right – and not very masterful. The mastery of life includes handling the agreements you've already made. One of the agreements I made was to be my mother's and father's son. I tried to break that agreement. The problem was that for a whole raft of people that agreement still existed. Instead of taking responsibility and letting go of my agreement, I broke it. By breaking it, I became subject to it. Instead of wanting to go over there, I had to not go over there. I had no choice any more.

Cleaning Up Your Mess

The mastery of life includes integrity. Integrity is the process of cleaning up the mess you made. We made a whole bunch of agreements and didn't keep them. I said I wanted to be a chemist and never kept that agreement. I only made that agreement with myself, but I am very important in my life. So I have to get my agreement that it is alright to let that agreement go. Once I do that, the agreement ceases to exist. I start to look at the things that I agreed that I wanted to be, do and have and find out that it's all right not to be, do and have those now, and the agreements go.

I've also made some agreements with other people and I will have to handle those agreements. I'll have to say to whomever I made the agreement: Look, I made an agreement with you and what I'd like to do now is not to keep that agreement. I'd like to know what you need in order to be willing to give that agreement.”

In your lives there will be people that you have an inherent agreement to communicate with that you haven't communicated with. You've withheld your communication. You can go back and clean up that mess by taking responsibility and communicating with those people.

If you've left some problems unsolved in your life – and a problem unsolved in your life is one that keeps coming up – you can handle it by expanding your purposes to include solving it. All of a sudden, what was a problem ceases to be a problem. It becomes a part of the solution. For the most part, simply acknowledging to the person that you made an agreement that you didn't keep, or that you did something to them, would be enough to clean it up. Essentially, what you do is to expand your purposes – which are to make your life work – to include making their life work.

You can say, "My goal is to make my life work and for your life to work." You've got to clean up the mess with the people you have upsets with, the people you are out of sorts with. That's the beginning of mastery. You need to clean up the mess you made, whatever the mess is. To make it effortless to clean up the mess you've made, you've got to assume the point of view that your purpose in life includes cleaning it up. That allows you to move from here to there and include on the way over, cleaning up the mess. You could also stop moving from here to there and go clean up the mess you made, but that isn't necessary. If there are any things you've done wrong, and badness, any horrors, and secrets – if you've got any of that stuff in your life, you don't have to stop your life. All you have to do is expand your purposes, so that the process of getting from where you are to where you want to be includes cleaning up all the messes you've made. That takes the heaviness and horror out of it.

Having Your Cake And Eating It

It's all right for you to get back into the game and to play it totally. It's all right for you to expand your purposes in life to get what you want out of life and clean up the mess you've made. "You mean, I don't have to make up for all the bad things I've done before my life can start?" Truly, you don't have to make up for all the bad things you've done. And in order to master life, you will have to clean up the mess you've made. If you can simply expand your purposes – in other words, if you can allow your purpose to be aliveness: love, health, happiness and full self expression – if you can allow that to be the purpose for which you play the game, the purpose for which you've made the other things; if you can allow that purpose of aliveness to expand and include cleaning up the mess you've made you can have your cake and eat it too.

Letting Go Of Your Failed Purposes

Another part of mastering life is to let go of some of your failed purposes. If you can acknowledge the things in life that you have let go of, and either rehabilitate your desire to achieve them or let go of achieving them, they stop being stops for you. If you found something in life you wanted to be that you don't think you can be, you can be that. If you found something in life that you wanted to do and you don't think you can do that, you can do that. If you found something in life that you wanted to have, that you don't think you can have, you can have it. You need to expand your purpose to include whatever it is that's stopping you from being that, or doing it or having it.

For whatever you wanted to have that you don't think you can have, see what it is that's keeping you from having that. See what it is that's keeping you from having that. See what it is that that thing wants.

Summing Up

Let me sum up. You can get inside that collection of reasons called your mind and complicate it to whatever degree you'd like to complicate it. But when all is said and done, life is a game. Some of the games have enormous consequences. However, if you get stuck in the importance of it, then you no longer see that it's a game. Even when the consequences are enormous, you need to realize it's a game. Everything in life is a game, except living.

Living is not a game. Living is simply what is. In order to have a game, what isn't has to be more important than what is. You make a game by saying that you're going to get to what isn't and that you're going to get there from what is. So you need to know what is, to know what you're going from, and you need to know what you want to that you know what isn't, to know what you're going to. And then it's just a process of strolling over there, and the only thing that complicates it are other flows. When you see another flow coming at you, what to do is not to stop and handle the other flow. What to do when you see another flow moving in our life, when you see something that is keeping you from where you're going, when you see something is bothering you or nagging at you.... What to do is to observe it to see what it wants, and expand your purposes to include what it wants. You have at that point mastered the situation.

Your life is really composed of where you are, and where you're going to be. All of the things in life that are a problem for you, all of the stops in your life, are truly a part of your getting there. You cannot fail. You can make it take a little longer; you can walk over here and hit a barrier and stand around and dance with it and do all kinds of things, but eventually you get on with it.

The only reason we've talked about mastering life is so that you can get beyond life to the thing called living. You can transcend life. There's an enormous value

in doing that, because once you're living you can then do life a little better. Ultimately, knowing what it means to live isn't the end of the ball game. You've got to get back to where you are.

You can't avoid the trip; the trip's got to be taken too. We do need to master life. As you master life, what happens is that there's more experiencing here now.