



Blue Mountain

ESTABLISHED BY EKNATH EASWARAN
FOR PRESENTING HIS EIGHT-POINT
PROGRAM OF PASSAGE MEDITATION

EKNATH
EASWARAN

has been called one of the foremost teachers of meditation in our times. From his arrival in the United States in 1959 on the Fulbright exchange program until his passing in the fall of 1999, he taught to modern men and women his eight-point program, based on his unique method of meditation on memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions. Many thousands of people representing the full range of cultural and religious backgrounds attest to the benefits of his teaching. He continues to teach through his thirty books on spiritual living — over a million copies in print in twenty-seven languages — and through the ongoing programs and publications of the organization he founded in 1961 to carry on his work: the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation and its publishing arm, Nilgiri Press.

Life Is a Trust

By Eknath Easwaran

IN MY university days, graduation was always one of the highlights of spring. In India the ceremony of awarding degrees is called convocation because all the faculty of the university are expected to attend, on display with cap and gown and the other colorful medieval regalia retained through centuries of tradition. It was a deeply satisfying sight to see our students march in solemnly with their bright young faces shining with confidence, full of faith in the future, looking forward to what they were going to do with the rest of their lives: enter a career, perhaps help their parents or pay for a younger sister's education, or make a contribution to a newly independent India.

In the last convocation I attended at the University of Nagpur, degrees were administered in Sanskrit. It was an appropriate reminder that this is a very ancient rite of passage: entry into the second stage of life in the traditional Indian scheme of things, the "householder" stage, in which one takes up a worthy occupation in the heart of society and is expected to marry and raise a family.

This is the traditional view, and not only in India. Every young man or woman entering this stage of life is expected to find a good job, marry well, and generally contribute to the honor and well-being of family and community. And, of course, a good job means the one that pays well or offers a ladder to increasing prestige or influence.

India's ancient scriptures, however, put this into a spiritual perspective. In this view, life is said to rest on two unshakable pillars. The first is *rita*, the universal order that keeps the cosmos in harmonious balance from the

farthest galaxy to the lives of individual human beings. Rita is closely connected with dharma, the central law that all of life is one indivisible whole. The word *dharma* comes from the root *dhri*, "to support": dharma is what supports us, what holds us together. This universal law is inscribed on every cell of our being, and the proof of it is that the more we live for others, the healthier our body becomes, the calmer our mind becomes, the clearer our intellect becomes, the deeper our love and wisdom become.

The second pillar is *yajna*, "offering": not a ritual offering in this context, but the principle of service, giving of oneself for the welfare of others. In

Continued
on page 4

From our archives: Eknath Easwaran, 1979



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1 Life Is a Trust



Eknath Easwaran looks at one of the biggest questions we face on entering the second stage of life: finding the right job. But what is the "right job"? India's ancient scriptures offer a surprising perspective, as relevant today as ever.

8 Finding a Path Home



According to the Buddha, none of us is unemployed. Everyone has the same real job: realizing the unity of life. Sri Easwaran's comments are accompanied by quotations from a few friends in our eSatsang describing how they found their way to passage meditation.

13 Presenting Meditation to College Students



Invited to give a brief introduction to students at a nearby college, we came up with a script that other students can use as well. Two email selections narrate the beginning of what we hope will become a very long story.

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Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

The Center offers instruction in meditation and allied living skills, following the eight-point program of passage meditation developed by Sri Eknath Easwaran. The approach is nondenominational, nonsectarian, and free from dogma and ritual. It can be used within each person's own cultural and religious background to relieve stress, heal relationships, release deeper resources, and realize one's highest potential.

Passage Meditation: An Eight-Point Program

1. **MEDITATION ON A PASSAGE** Silent repetition in the mind of memorized inspirational passages from the world's great religions. Practiced for one-half hour each morning.
2. **REPETITION OF A MANTRAM** Silent repetition in the mind of a Holy Name or a hallowed phrase from one of the world's great religions. Practiced whenever possible throughout the day or night.
3. **SLOWING DOWN** Setting priorities and reducing the stress and friction caused by hurry.
4. **ONE-POINTED ATTENTION** Giving full concentration to the matter at hand.
5. **TRAINING THE SENSES** Overcoming conditioned habits and learning to enjoy what is beneficial.
6. **PUTTING OTHERS FIRST** Gaining freedom from selfishness and separateness; finding joy in helping others.
7. **SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP** Spending time regularly with other passage meditators for mutual inspiration and support.
8. **SPIRITUAL READING** Drawing inspiration from writings by and about the world's great spiritual figures and from the scriptures of all religions.

Eknath Easwaran

Schooled in both Eastern and Western traditions, Eknath Easwaran took to the spiritual life amidst a successful career in India as a professor of English literature, a writer, and a lecturer. After coming to the University of California, Berkeley, on the Fulbright exchange program, he established the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Northern California in 1961. His 1968 Berkeley class is believed to be the first accredited course in meditation at any Western university. His deep personal experience and his love for his students have made the ancient art of meditation accessible to those who hold jobs and lead active lives among friends and family.

What Shall I Do With My Life?



Christine Easwaran

WE ARE continuing our series on the stages of life, devoting this issue to one of the most important decisions faced on entering the second stage: *What shall I do with my life?*

This is a perennial question, so I was not surprised when one of our friends posted this appeal on one of our forums:

"I have a lot of students who come to me asking for career advice. Many of my colleagues advise our students to go after profit, prestige, and power. I do think it's important to ask whether a career pays enough to allow you to lead a comfortable (but not extravagant) life, and whether there is enough demand to ensure a minimal amount of job security. But, of course, it is also very important to feel that in your job you are contributing to the welfare of others (or at least not harming others). Unfortunately this often does not come up in most advising my students receive.

"So I would love to hear your thoughts, suggestions and stories about various kinds of jobs and their good and bad points. I am hoping that this discussion will also be helpful to others on this list, since I'm sure some of you are looking for work; and,

although I like my job at the moment, there may come a time when I am looking for other options as well."

Sri Easwaran never tired of answering this question. For him, too, it had little to do with getting a good job, securing fame or fortune, or finding Mr. or Miss Right. He approached it from a spiritual perspective based on timeless values, as he explains in our lead article, "Life Is a Trust." From this point of view, we are given life for the purpose of giving back to life. We come into this world to serve, and a good job is one that enables us to make the world a little better by drawing on the education, skills, and abilities we have.

tourist – or just plain being lost – and looking here and there for something we can only find at home. It takes some experience of life to learn that we must turn inwards to find happiness, and then it is that we take up what he calls "our essential vocation": meditation.

Easwaran's article is accompanied by a small sample of stories from friends in our eSatsangs describing one of life's great mysteries: how, just when the time is right, we find the right path and teacher to engage our hearts. Of course, we can only quote from the people we hear from: those who choose the path that Easwaran taught. The important thing is to find a

way that enables us to unify our desires around realizing the unity of life. Easwaran often emphasized that it is a diverse number of us ordinary people taking to the spiritual life that will enable the renaissance of spiritual values the world so desperately needs.

One can take to the spiritual life at any age, but Easwaran had a special place in his heart for those we now call "YAs": young adults in their twenties or thirties who don't need much experience of life to feel ready for meditation. While the fundamental issues are the same for everyone – the mind is, after all, the mind – the strengths and challenges of this stage of life are special, as the quote boxed on this page insists. In response to this need, we are beginning to

offer more YA retreats and have created a template for an introductory program that young people anywhere can offer on their own. Pages 12–13 tell the story of how this program got started and one student's response. I hope we will hear from many more.

Christine Easwaran

For the Board of Trustees

"This [recent retreat] made me realize how important it is for us to have a young adult passage mediator fellowship group, if for no other reason than the fact that we have unique problems and concerns. Not that we are necessarily so much different because of our age, but because we often encounter different issues that are not so much a part of an older person's life. For example, for those of us in a college-like setting, the exposure to excessive alcohol use, or just generally hedonistic lifestyles, is something that's more difficult to completely avoid. . . ."

– From the YA email forum

The last word on this subject, Easwaran says, comes from the Buddha. Our essential job in life – everyone's essential job in life – is to discover what life is for, that is, to attain Self-realization. Most of us, of course, don't even think of making this a priority. We have other things to do. In "Finding a Path Home" (p. 8) Easwaran compares this with playing

Continued
from page 1

practical terms, *yajna* means that everything we do should be for the welfare of all those around us. This principle of service is what upholds the order of the world, and when it is ignored, the Bhagavad Gita says – that is, when we ignore the welfare of others in the pursuit of personal motives – the very foundations of a society are shaken.

Life Is a Trust

“At the time of creation,” the Bhagavad Gita says, “the Lord gave humanity the path of selfless service.” In other words, we are not given life for our own enjoyment. Our highest duty is to give back to life. Life is a trust, and each of us is a trustee whose job is to use the assets entrusted to us for the greatest benefit to all. It follows that the real mark of an educated man or woman is not university degrees but how much they contribute to the welfare of others, and the question to ask at graduation is not “What job will bring me the best salary or the most prestige?” but “How can I help to make the world a little better for my having lived?”

In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, who represents you and me, “I have asked the sun to give you life, the sea to give you water, the clouds to give you rain, the winds to purify the air you breathe, and the trees and plants to give you food. I have asked all the forces of nature to give you everything to satisfy your needs. Therefore, if you try to live for yourself without returning this to me – drinking my water, eating my food, doing everything with my energy all the twenty-four hours – what is the difference between you and a thief?”

When the Lord hits hard like this, I imagine Arjuna scratching his head self-consciously like Laurel of Laurel and Hardy used to do. It is as if he were thinking out loud, “I never thought of it like that before!” It is easy to identify with Arjuna’s embarrassment. Sri Krishna is appealing to our sense of

dignity and self-respect in order to encourage us. Nobody likes being a parasite. Everybody likes to contribute something. When people do you a favor, you like to find a way of doing them a favor in return. And when it comes to our relations with the guiding principle of the universe, Sri Krishna is kind enough to spell out to us human beings, who tend to be forgetful of these things, just what we can do in order to return these magnificent favors. We can use the energy he gives us, he says, to live for all, thereby promoting the cause of unity among all creatures.

This is far more than a subtle hint. In no uncertain terms the Lord is letting us know that this is his law, the underlying law of life. To the extent we live in accordance with this law, everything will tend to work in our favor, and thus to favor the whole. All we have to do is live by the rule.

In this sense, none of us is ever unemployed. We always have a job to do. We are sent into life for one task: to enrich the lives of others.

“First, Do No Harm”

The very first criterion for a good job in the Gita’s view, then, is that it not be at the expense of others. The Buddha considered this so important that he made Right Occupation part of his Eightfold Noble Path. It reminds me of the physician’s oath: “First, do no harm.” I think that is a very good oath for all of us to swear by. If we want to improve the quality of our lives, the very first step is to be sure that our livelihood is not gained at the expense of life. Any job that brings injury or suffering to any other creature should be shunned as unworthy of a human being.

“All creatures love life,” the Buddha says. “All creatures fear death. Therefore do not kill, or cause another to kill.” Even if we only lend support to activities that bring harm to other people or other creatures, we are violating

the most basic law of life. I am a vegetarian, for example, not merely because of age-old custom, but because I know that the divinity that is present in my heart and yours is present in every living thing.

When we begin to look at life this way, we may well find that we have got ourselves involved unwittingly in work that the Buddha would call “wrong occupation.” This can be a distressing discovery with very awkward consequences. There is no point in blaming ourselves if we find that in ignorance of the unity of life, we have taken up a job that is at the expense of life. Yet once we realize this, it is incumbent on each of us to withdraw from such activities, even if that entails a cut in pay or a turbulent period of looking for work where we can use our skills in more beneficial ways.

If followed sincerely, this one simple principle – “first, do no harm” – could transform our society. Imagine what would happen if all the talent, time, and resources that now go into military research, violent or sensate entertainment, and the production and marketing of products that are harmful to health were diverted to solving the problems of unemployment, homelessness, abuse, and violence that plague this country, the richest on the earth. Even if our paying job does not make much of a contribution, there are many opportunities for selfless service where we can offer our time, energy, skills, and enthusiasm to a cause bigger than ourselves.

Personal Dharma

When the prefix *sva* is added to *dharma*, the word becomes *sva-dharma*, our own personal dharma. This is our present context, our present assets and liabilities. On the spiritual path, we start from where we stand by fulfilling our present responsibilities: on the campus, at the office, or in the home. This personal dharma is not fixed; as our spiritual awareness



Easwaran with students, UC Berkeley, 1967

deepens and our capacities grow, our responsibilities and opportunities for service will become greater. What is the right occupation now may not be right later on, but as long as it is not at the expense of others, our job or profession can be made a part of our contribution to life.

It is important to understand that all of us begin work with mixed motives. We want to contribute to the welfare of others; but at the same time, we are concerned with ensuring our own private advantage. It takes quite a while for most of us to become fully aware that our welfare is included in the welfare of all and to realize that when we are working for everybody, we are also ensuring our own well-being.

We all begin the spiritual life with action that is partly egoistic, partly egoless, and none of us need be discouraged when we find in the early days that there is some motive of enlightened self-interest driving us on to action. Without this motive in the beginning, action may be difficult. It is good to accept this from the first. I, too, started my teaching work with some

private motives. Although I was devoted to my students, there was a measure of personal motivation also. But I went on giving my very best to my meditation and my students, and gradually, through a lot of effort, I found that my personal motives were dissolving in the overwhelming desire to be of service.

The Secret of Work

Here the Bhagavad Gita gives us a precious secret: how we work is as important as what we do. Your job may be nothing more glamorous than a janitor in a hospital, but if you are following right occupation and doing your best to put the welfare of those around you first, you will be contributing to other people's lives, even though you may not see it happening. These are spiritual laws.

We don't have to envy others because the jobs they do seem to be more prestigious or creative or because other people seem to have more skill. We are where we are, doing what we are doing, because we have something to learn from that particular context. What and who we are – all

that we have thought, done, and desired, our upbringing and our education – has brought us to that job and to those co-workers, and that makes it just the situation we need to grow. With growth will come a new context to work in, new people, new challenges, greater opportunities for service.

Is there any job that is 100 percent perfect? Is there any position where you do only what you think you should, where your employer gives you meditation breaks and allows you to tell her how to conduct her business according to your interpretation of the eternal verities? Every job has its requirements that are not our own. Very few jobs are pure. No occupation is free from conflict; no task guarantees to protect us from stressful situations or from people with different views. And no job is free from drudgery; every line of work has a certain amount of routine. So the Gita says, Don't ask if you like the work, if it is creative, if it always offers something new. Ask if you are part of work that benefits people. If you are, give it your best. In that

*Continued on
next page*



Easwaran with students from UC Berkeley, 1997

*Continued from
previous page*

spirit, every beneficial job can become a spiritual offering.

The Attainment of Wisdom

In other words, the Gita would say, the purpose of work is the attainment of wisdom. Modern civilization hasn't caught up with this idea, which turns economics upside down. It doesn't deny the need to support ourselves and our families, to have a sense of personal fulfillment, and even to provide the goods and services on which society depends. But there is a higher purpose for work, and that is self-purification: to expand our consciousness to include the whole of life by removing the obstacles to Self-realization. And there is no way to do this except in our relationships at work and at home: by being patient, being kind, working in harmony, never failing to respect others, and never seeking personal aggrandizement.

There is a simple distinction we can make between knowledge and wis-

dom: knowledge is about things; wisdom is about living. There is no necessary connection. An astronomer may know all about black holes but not know how to be patient at home. And the mystics of all religions ask, which is more important? After all, it is possible to get along in life without knowing about black holes. But if we do not know how to be patient or loving, life is a miserable affair – not only for us, but for those around us.

Our lives have become so physically oriented that we expect the spiritual person to have some kind of insignia, some special aura. The only aura that the spiritual person emits is kindness. One Western mystic sums up the spiritual life in one short phrase: “Be kind, be kind, be kind” – kind to those who are kind to you, kind to those who are not kind to you. It is one of the surest tests of wisdom. A ship is not tested in the harbor, where the water is quiet; it is tested on the open seas. The greatest scientist, the bravest soldier, the most brilliant artist can go to pieces in times of personal trial – the loss of some-

thing they valued, a sudden reversal of fortune, a tragedy in the family. The mystics ask, What use is a ship that is seaworthy only in good weather? And for most of us, the best test is not the big storms but the innumerable little squalls of daily living.

If you want to apply this to yourself, it's very simple: look at your home when everything is at sixes and sevens. The children have to go to school and Jackie has just got up; her hair hasn't been combed yet, breakfast is cold, and Ira has hidden her homework. Then the car won't start, and when you go back into the house to call the garage, there is the gasman at the front door wanting to settle last month's bill. Everything is hemming you in; what do you do? There are people who freeze over when something like this happens; they go around under a little storm cloud for the rest of the day, chilling everybody they meet. But look at the mystics: the harder things get, the kinder they become. It's not that they like to suffer; they just aren't thinking about themselves: they don't

want to pass the storm on to us. They attend to each little problem with complete attention: staying calm, skillful, unhurried but efficient, without getting rattled or losing their tenderness or respect.

When you go to work, it should be the same. Wisdom is not simply for the home; if it is genuine, it will show everywhere. It's easy to smile when Ebenezer remembers your birthday with a card, but that is no test; your ship is still in harbor. What do you do when he takes an early vacation and leaves all his old files in your box of things to do? How do you respond when Rosie asks you to watch her desk for fifteen minutes and comes back an hour later with a big shopping bag on her arm? What do you do when your boss calls you in at five minutes to five and wants to rake you over the coals? The person who is established in wisdom won't become defensive; he or she will slowly try to calm the storm. He knows he gives his best to his work, so he is secure; he can remain courteous and listen

objectively while his boss rants and raves. Afterwards, instead of the coals, such people often get the red carpet. They are an asset everywhere: because they cannot be agitated, they help everybody around them to stay calm too.

Our Real Vocation

In the long view, the Buddha would say, each of us has only one essential obligation: to realize the unity of life. Until we do this, whatever else we may accomplish, we haven't done what we came here to do.

This is what attaining wisdom means, and rightly understood, it can free us from all kinds of worries. The Buddha is telling us that whatever our day job is – and whatever our boss might think! – it consists essentially not in making things or providing services, but in training the mind and reducing self-will: the purification of consciousness.

Once, when I said this to a small group of students, one of them objected, "Well, how are we to do this?"

"I know of only one way," I said: "the practice of meditation."

She laughed. "Why did I think you were going to say that?"

I had to agree: there, I am highly predictable. I know of no other way to transform consciousness than the sustained, systematic practice of meditation and its ancillary disciplines. Until we make this commitment, the Gita says, the decisions of life "are many-branched and endless"; but once we do make this commitment, everything begins to fall into place. When we practice meditation regularly and follow the allied disciplines to the very best of our ability, we have only to do our best; the opportunities we need for spiritual growth cannot help but come when the time is right.

Whatever our occupation, we can make our whole life a work of art, so that everybody who comes in contact with us benefits from our patience, our understanding, our love and wisdom. In this way, everyone who is practicing meditation is making a lasting contribution to the rest of life. ☺

Easwaran with students, 1993



Finding a Path Home

by Eknath Easwaran

IN EVERY time and every place where people have thought deep and hard about life, they have left some record of a haunting sense of being in exile, of being a wanderer far from home. We are all tourists in this world – looking about ourselves trying to figure out what we ought to be feeling when we stand before this statue or that palace and

wishing at every turn that we were back home.

The nostalgia of world travelers is ironic, because it is usually a feeling very like nostalgia that has launched them in the first place: something about the brochures at the travel agent's, the pictures of swaying coconut palms that beckon so seductively, that makes us want to say, "There, that's where I'll find my paradise. That's what I've always yearned for." We each have our own versions. To some it's the arched ways of Oxford University, to others the gleaming white islands of the Aegean. "There – there I could be happy."

Exiles all, we know very well that we are meant to live in permanent joy and

ever-increasing love, and nothing short of this will satisfy us. In the words of Mechthild of Magdeburg, "The soul is made of love, and must ever strive to return to love." There is an inward tug in everybody, a persistent voice that calls, "Come back to the source."

Lifelong Learning

As an educator, I like to think of this as lifelong learning: a long series of experiments and explorations that leads to Self-discovery.

We know what a struggle it is to understand a school subject that seems alien. I remember that I could look at the same theorem in geometry a thousand times and it would never reveal

"Meditation? Blah"

I came across Easwaran's book on passage meditation many years ago at the local library. Practiced a little, then quit. Did that again a few years later. And a third time, too! Spiritual reading has never been a problem for me, but meditating . . . well, frankly, blah. I hated it.

I waffled around for a couple more years, and finally came back to Easwaran's teachings and got serious. I loved his practical approach, and the way he integrated the teachings of mystics and saints from different religions.

I'm fortunate enough to have a special room for meditating, and it took a couple of months before I stopped feeling grumpy and put-upon every time I walked past. Suddenly – or so it seemed – I caught myself smiling when I looked in there and thought of meditating. Now if I'm having a bad day, "St. Teresa's bookmark" or St. Francis de Sales' "Do not look with fear" helps me look at my emotions with clarity and understanding. My relationships with other people are calmer and less judgmental.

I don't mean to make it sound like everything suddenly turned up hunky-dory in my life. Sometimes I still don't want to meditate, and I have my negative moments like anyone else, but the eight-point program has given me tools to work with that I've never had before. I wish I'd stuck with Easwaran's teachings way back when I first found them! But you know what they say about wishes. ☺ ⇨

"When you are ready"

The old saying "when you are ready to learn something new, a teacher appears" played out for me when I picked up a Blue Mountain newsletter in a coffee shop three thousand miles from Tomales. An urgent need to cope with my own impatience and temper when personal and world events didn't go my way was my motivation in attending a regional workshop.

The 8PP is practical and the writings of Sri Easwaran are inspiring and gentle. I am making measurable progress in evolving from a worried, controlling person to an peaceful, accepting one. (Particularly regarding myself!) ⇨

its secrets; each time was like the first. We can go through life like this, facing the same lessons over and over but unable to get it right. It's as if we had to read a language in an unknown script, or make sense of a message that we don't realize is in code.

On the other hand, everyone finds it a thrill to master something difficult. Life can be like that too if we approach it in the same way: not asking "What can I get?" or "Why does this happen to me?" but "What can I learn from this? How can I learn to manage this better?"

Most of us start adult life under the impression that if we can make a lot of money, own a nice house, do things we like, and enjoy a reasonable measure of prestige in our chosen field, we

are going to be satisfied. Yet when we talk to people who have done these things, they often confide that what they wanted has slipped through their fingers.

Christine and I had a friend in India who was given to building beautiful homes. She had money, good taste, and plenty of imagination, and when we met her she had just finished a new home, decorated it beautifully, and moved in expecting to be happy the rest of her life. After a year or two, she reached the realization that this wasn't going to happen after all. She moved out, went to another locality, and built another beautiful home in a different style, again under the honest impression that she could live there happily forever. This too turned out to be not

quite what she was looking for; when we last saw her, she had moved on again to someplace new.

All of us do this, one way or another, and the Gita asks simply, "For how long? When will you tire of playing this game of seeking happiness outside? Don't you want to know who you are and what life is for?" In every country, there are a few people who have gone through the smorgasbord of life and are fed up. Making money, they decide, is child's play. Enjoying pleasure – where is the challenge? And as for fame, who wants "a food that dead men eat"? They have tried these things and found no meaning in them; now they want to know why they are here and whether life has any overriding purpose. Most

Continued on next page

"Come to Me"

Two years ago I was at an exercise class. There was a new instructor. At the end of the class, she put on a beautiful song called "Come to Me." I fell in love with the tune, searched for it online and downloaded it; it made me feel peaceful.

Two weeks later, my husband had a major heart attack and had to be flown out on an air ambulance. I grabbed my iPod and listened to this song for the next 24 hours. I started paying closer attention to the words of the song: "Come to me, I will take away your sorrows . . . come and you will find the inner one you want to . . ."

I realized then that the Lord had sent me this song as a call for me to start meditating.

When I went home, I went back to the gym to thank the instructor for giving me this song that kept me sane, but she had left town; I have never seen her again.

The next few months I would get up every morning and listen to this song in silence, but in the back

of my mind I knew that I had to start meditating without the music.

That Christmas, a friend of mine introduced me to Easwaran's book *Upanishads*. I read it and moved on to the Gita which has become my ultimate guide to life. I kept purchasing his books and couldn't put them down, it was as if he was speaking to me. I decided to try passage meditation and get more serious about my meditation.

My father passed away and things at work got overwhelming. I felt like I was falling apart. I was doing my meditation, but was having a very hard time focusing on the passages and keeping my mind from running around like crazy. So I signed up for a BMCM retreat. This was the best gift I could've given myself. I left the retreat feeling like a new person. It made me understand that the other steps of the program were also as important and they would help me with my meditation as well as allow me to make the necessary changes in my life. . . . ↵

Continued from
previous page

important, they see that death is walking behind them, closer every day, and they have no idea what to do.

For those who are sensitive and have some capacity to learn from their experience, it takes only a little playing with pleasure and profit to conclude that such things cannot bring fulfillment. These are life's fast learners, and they save themselves a great deal of suffering. The rest of us go on playing the same game over and over and over without learning from it. We get caught in this search for happiness outside and cannot change.

The Upanishads have a haunting story about finding a way out of this maze. We are, they say, like a man from a far-off country who has been kid-

napped and left tied and blindfolded miles and miles from home. He blunders here and there, bumping into trees and stumbling over roots and fallen branches, crying desperately for help, but no one responds. Finally a stranger passing by hears his cries and comes to remove his blindfold and untie his hands. "There lies the way," he tells him, pointing. "Follow that path. Ask for directions as you go, and you will surely make your way home."

Sooner or later, that is just what happens with each of us, except that what makes the blindfold fall from our eyes varies from person to person. For some it may be suffering. For others, it is a thirst for meaning in a world that seems to make no sense, or the deep, driving desire for answers to age-old

questions: Why am I here? What is life for? What happens when I die? Whatever the reason, the need to change direction builds up deep in the unconscious until finally it breaks through into conscious awareness. We go along for twenty or thirty years playing games at school, traveling about, going surfing, making money, learning all kinds of skills without a thought of meditation. Then one day we go to the bookstore and see the Bhagavad Gita or hear a talk on the *Imitation of Christ* and something clicks. Some words from the book or talk get in and we go home dazed. We think about them, ponder over them, and a little window in consciousness opens; we say to ourselves, "Maybe I should give this meditation a try . . ." ⇨

"It took a crisis"

I have been leading the typical overstressed life of a professional. It took a marital crisis to cause me to wake up. I did a lot of reading from many sources on how to change my life because I needed to change it or die way too early. I got many good ideas. Then I read about the Eight Points in Easwaran's book *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*. I realized he had put it together in one straightforward way. I have a long ways to go but am feeling much better about myself and my life just in the short time I have been doing it. ⇨

"Things come when you most need them"

Two years ago I was about to start a silent weekend retreat and I went through our bookshelves looking for something to read during those days, when *Meditation* by Eknath Easwaran caught my attention. My husband had already suggested I must read some of EE's books but until then I had not followed his advice. I think things come at hand when you most need them. From that day on I started

to follow the 8PP. Every morning, after waking up, both of us sit in "our special corner" to meditate. I feel it is the best way to start the day! ⇨

"The Hound of Heaven"

My self-image was "I can't meditate." In my church we're supposed to meditate and I'd tried many times, but monkey mind always took over. At a peacemaking class the trainer loaned me *The Compassionate Universe*, my first encounter with Easwaran, and I devoured it in one evening. I knew Easwaran had the answer. But – "I can't meditate." I read more of his books and watched his "Dynamics of the Mind" talks – BUT . . .

Finally this year a dear friend invited me to attend a regional retreat. I sat at the retreat, thinking the St. Francis prayer over and over, tears pouring down my face in the dark. I was meditating. Easwaran, the Hound of Heaven, had finally caught me! Now my self-image is: "I have this unruly monkey mind AND I can meditate – as long as I'm willing to sit with its antics." And so I do. ⇨



Easwaran's retreats helped men and women of all ages find a path to Self-realization. (1990)

“Now I have a purpose”

I live at college, where I am doing my bachelors degree. Coming here left me without goals (acceptance to the school had been my goal) and without idols (all the famous people around here have the same problems as anybody else). I didn't know what to do – how I should direct my life.

I began meditating at the Tibet House [and] at the same time, I was watching a nonviolence course on YouTube. Soon, I found a clip about passage meditation. I read the whole book online (now I have the book) and chose my mantram before finishing.

Now I have a purpose – to search for God in meditation and through others. At one point I considered leaving this college, but now I understand that we can never leave our problems. Our innermost needs must be addressed right here, wherever that “here” is. . . . ☞

“Like a homecoming”

Recently I retired and have been floundering from a loss of purpose. A friend had given me Easwaran's eight-point program book some years ago, and this time when I picked it up, to my great joy and relief, it felt like a homecoming. I realized that in all my searches in life, as passionately felt and well intended as they probably were, they have all been far too narrow in scope.

The first book I read from the recommended reading was Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*, and when I read the sentence “The aim and purpose of human life is the unitive knowledge of God,” I knew that that is the structural basis of life that I had been groping towards but unable, until now, to find. I understand that in turning to God we must at the same time turn away from ourselves and therein lies the key to that unitive purpose. I embrace this with a full and open heart. ☞

Presenting Meditation to College Students

When Eknath Easwaran brought meditation to the university campus in 1968, it was a full-credit, three-unit course – a significant commitment. Considering the pressures on students today, we wondered, might there be a place for just a simple, one-hour introduction to what passage meditation can do? Recently we got an opportunity to test this idea. Here are messages from our YA (“young adult”) email forum telling how the story began.



Two of us here at the BMCM recently gave a presentation about passage meditation at a local college, and I'd like to share how it went in case you would like to do something similar.

The opportunity came from a professor concerned about her first-year students, who are dealing with stress, financial worries, and academic pressures while coping with a culture of partying, alcohol, and drugs. She asked us to talk to two different classes for 50 minutes about meditation. As you can imagine, we jumped at the opportunity!

We considered carefully what the needs and levels of interest would be from these 18- and 19-year-olds. At BMCM retreats people come wanting to learn about meditation, but these students were simply turning up for a class they had to attend, so they would be unlikely to know why meditation would be of interest or benefit to them.

We decided that our goal was to plant a seed: to give them a taste of what meditation is like and see why training the mind is valuable, how meditation can help them with specific issues they are facing, and why

passage meditation is a simple and effective technique they can start using at any time.

Then we asked ourselves, “How can we accomplish this in 50 minutes?”

The key seemed to be lots of interaction with the students – to really listen to them and understand who they are and what their needs are, and to give just enough information about the practice so they could experience what it was like and know where to go next if they wanted to learn more. We came up with an outline we've posted to the Web at <http://www.easwaran.org/howtohelp>.

The end result? It was a big hit! There was lots of discussion, insightful comments, and honesty, and they really enjoyed being drawn out and listened to. I got the feeling that this was a very unusual experience for them. And by the time we introduced the instructions in meditation, you could hear a pin drop.

At the end of the presentation, the whole atmosphere had changed. Many recognized for the first time how fast their minds are. They reported that just 5 minutes of meditation had made them feel

much calmer. Many had never done anything like this before; it made a big impression. And the professor, who had been in the presentation twice, said that she had been haunted all week by the line in the Dhammapada: “All that we are is the result of what we have thought.”

So, my YA friends, if you are interested in doing something similar, feel free to use this template and adapt it to your timing and audience. We’ll be trying out these presentations at more colleges and improving the curriculum based on what we learn, so if you do try it, tell us how it goes!

And One Student Responds



*Dear friends,
Over twenty-five people came to our 1-hour presentation last Sunday. These were people my age – fellow students. I had never led an hour-long presentation before.*

I remember getting a dry throat five years ago when I had to explain a composition for a couple of minutes to a few others and not being able to talk. This passage meditation presentation could have been similar. Right?

Nope! All of you were right there with us, and Sri Easwaran was shining through us all the while. How do I know? The me I know can’t give presentations like that. This was eloquent and enthusiastic. I knew that all of us want to see peace in the world – so much desire for a spiritual renaissance in one room! The students were attentive, and through repetition of the mantram I was able to wipe off enough fear to let Sri Easwaran’s teaching shine through without getting a dry throat.

Our audience responded. The college-presentation script is an interactive one, and from the first question we posed to the last, answers and comments were forthcoming, thoughtful, and polite!

I was surprised when nearly everyone raised their hand to the question, “How many of you think it might be worth trying to train our minds?” Wow – what a good desire coming from a couple dozen people! The script led us from one idea to the next, and finally it led them to meditate for

five minutes. We only had to make a couple of changes to the script to personalize it.

Eleven people took Blue Mountain journals and ten signed up for my new mailing list. That list has now grown to 23. What a blessing, however, if just one person comes away from this endeavor knowing that it is possible to train the mind to live in harmony with the world!

Before I close, I just want to share with you the things students came up with when asked, “Why aren’t we deliriously happy all the time?”

- * distractions (like shopping, social media)*
- * overwhelming potential (there’s so much to do!)*
- * impatience*
- * lack of security*
- * dwelling on the future*
- * not allowing ourselves to be present*
- * superficial (we feel we always have to appear happy)*
- * expectations to be happy from outside*
- * dwelling on problems*

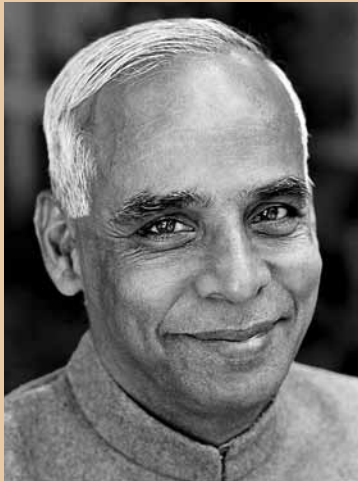
We were able to circle everything when we asked the students, “Which of these issues would disappear if our minds were completely trained?” It shows how sensitive people can be when asked honest questions.

To see the script for college students, please visit www.easwaran.org/howtohelp. If you have a group that is already interested, you can find our standard one-hour presentation at www.easwaran.org/retreatpromotion

Would you be willing to give this page to a young adult friend who may be interested in meditation, or post it at a college campus, bookstore, library, or café?

Young Adult Retreat: Learn Passage Meditation

How do I base my life on my highest ideals? What contribution should I be making to the world? How can I effectively manage stress and problems in my life? How can I be at my best more often?



Eknath Easwaran, who developed passage meditation, is known as an authority on meditation and timeless wisdom. More than 1.5 million of his books are in print, and his translations of the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the Dhammapada are all bestsellers in their field.

IF YOU are interested in finding answers to these questions, come to this weekend retreat about the practice and benefits of passage meditation.

This form of meditation is universal and asks for no change of beliefs. Whatever faith tradition or spiritual ideals you aspire to, passage meditation can help you access your own inner resources to become the person you most want to be. People attend our programs from all over the world, of all ages, lifestyles, and cultural backgrounds.



“Here are some of the benefits I am currently experiencing:

- * I am more productive and efficient*
- * I have more sustained energy*
- * I am sleeping better at night*
- * I am more giving, understanding and forgiving*
- * I am training my mind to be peaceful and quiet.*

The BMCM is the best-kept secret around. After learning about this, the last several months have been among the most rewarding of my life. These tools have the power to affect every aspect of your life, no matter what you are interested in.” – From a recent young adult retreatant

Young Adult Retreat (ages 18–35) November 2–4, 2012

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in Tomales, California (about 1 hour north
of San Francisco)**

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For more information call us at

800 475 2369 or visit www.easwaran.org

A free online course to learn passage meditation is also available at www.easwaran.org/learn

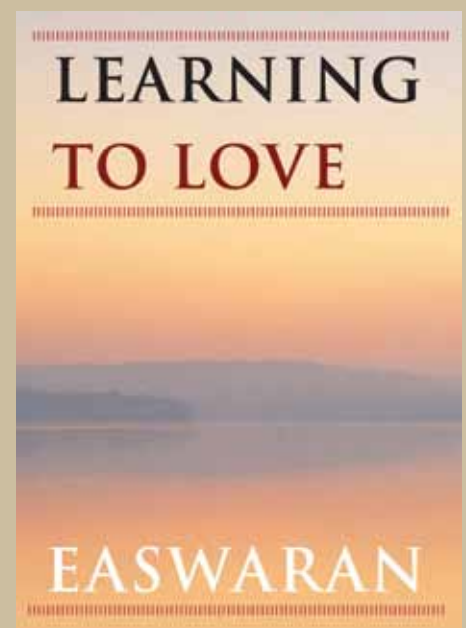
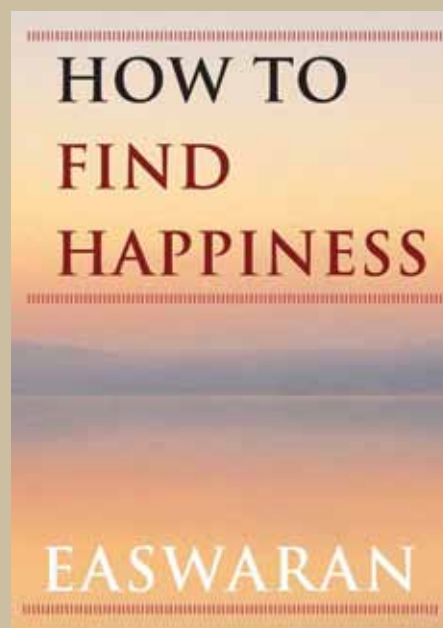
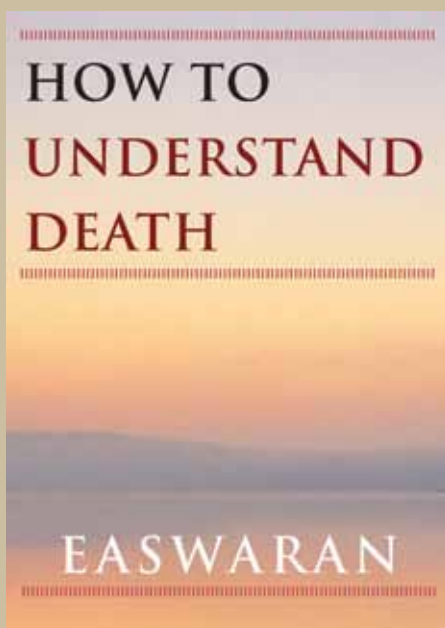
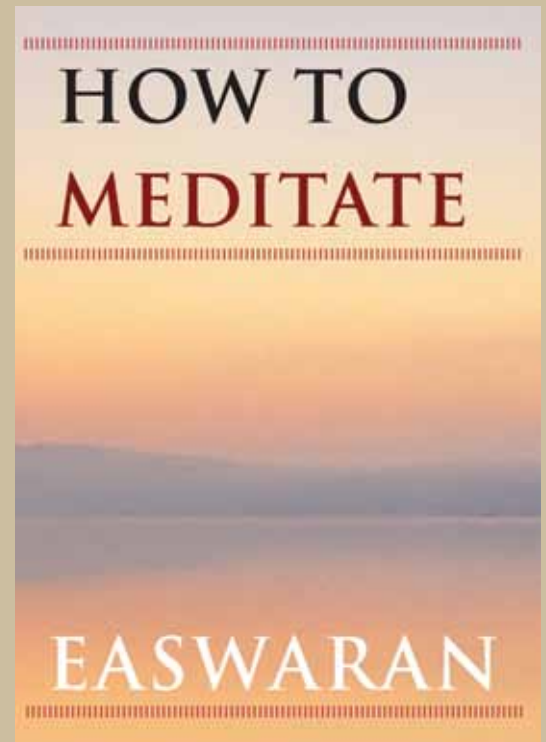
How to Meditate: A Short Ebook Introduction to Easwaran

With the emergence of ebooks and e-readers such as the Kindle, Nook, and iPad, we've been trying to find new ways to help more readers to discover Easwaran's method of passage meditation.

We were also looking for something short that could serve as an introduction both to Easwaran's classic *Passage Meditation* and to the free online meditation course on our website.

So in June last year we published a new ebook titled *How to Meditate*, containing just the chapter on meditation and the short essay "Invitation to a Journey," both from *Passage Meditation*. This ebook is available for 99 cents or the equivalent in 32 countries, in a range of formats for all the popular e-readers.

We followed up with three more short ebooks to introduce new readers to Easwaran's teachings: *How to Understand Death*, *How to Find Happiness*, and *Learning to Love*. All three are based on extracts from journal articles and other published works by Easwaran. We've called the series Easwaran Inspirations, and plan to publish more titles in this series later in the year.



Easwaran Inspirations: eshorts for your e-reader

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enroll, visit us at
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or contact us at
800 475 2369 or
info@easwaran.org**

In Tomales, California

June 8–10: Returnee Weekend [FULL]
July 7–13: In-Depth Weeklong w/YA [FULL]
August 4–10: In-Depth Weeklong
August 17–21: Senior Half-Week
August 24–26: Introductory Weekend
September 21–23: Returnee Weekend
September 29–10/5: In-Depth Weeklong
October 13–19: In-Depth Weeklong [FULL]
November 2–4: Young Adult Weekend
November 9–11: Introductory Weekend
November 30–12/2: Returnee Weekend

Across the US

June 15–17: New York (Ossining) Weekend
June 16: New York (Ossining) One-Day
August 3–5: Denver Weekend
August 4: Denver One-Day
September 8: San Diego One-Day
September 28–30: Chicago Weekend
September 29: Chicago One-Day
November 10: Sacramento (Auburn) One-Day