



# Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

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## Choosing “Home” – Part 3: Intention

“Always drink upstream from the herd.” --- an old cowboy saying

(Part 3 in series on how a deep sense of *home* can offer you resilience and self-trust ... in a chaotic, uncertain world.)

Part 1, [April](#), showed how, *without* a connection to your personal truth, you become easy prey for uncertainty and chaos in the external world. This leads you to seeing fear and divisiveness, then to the struggle of defending yourself from what now appears to be a hostile world. This is how you may have come to believe more in your limitations than your potential. The “kind of conversation you are” is a easy clue to your current ways of seeing and thinking here.

Part 2, [May](#), showed the power of *discovering and developing* a solid connection with your unique essence, or inner truth, and how the consequent feeling of self-trust opens you to a life of learning, non-judgment, respect and gratitude.

Part 3, this month, explores how you can *sustain* “living your truth” using the power of conscious intention – choosing to trust your unique, creative essence, then allowing life’s natural feedback to light your path and guide you forward. Living from energy *inside* you leaves you resilient in the face of the chaos and uncertainty *outside* you.

Once you’ve become keenly aware of and connected to your unique life force, a world of possibility opens, possibility that was always there, yet hidden from your narrower view. You *become* this version of yourself by “setting the intention” to do so. *Intention* is a powerful construct, because it evokes energy *inside* you to create new world *outside* you.

**Intention** essentially describes where you’re putting your life energy each day, or, perhaps more simply stated, “what you’re up to” in any given moment. Although you’re always *up to something*, you’re not always consciously aware of what that *something* is. For example, *before* you connected with your inner truth, chances are good your energy went largely into upholding outdated beliefs and the demands and opinions of others – an unconscious attempt to ‘get along’ with the world. Although this might be viewed as “intention deficit disorder,” life up until now has probably gone just as you’ve ‘intended.’ *After* you’ve connected with your truth, however, you can choose – now consciously – to focus your energy on being your authentic self. Trusting yourself well enough to live your own truth is perhaps the ultimate in both personal power and personal freedom – your true, natural *home* in the world.

The world’s great masters “got this.” What *made* them masters was that they held the power of their own intention so strongly that nothing could deter them. Examples of such intentions: Gandhi (unconditional dignity), Jesus (clarity of heart, unconditional love), the Buddha (clarity of thought, unconditional presence), Mother Teresa (unconditional service), M.L. King (unconditional respect), Steve Jobs (elegant design). So, how do **you** do as the masters did? There’s an old saying that suggests: “Seek not the masters; seek what the masters sought.” And what they *sought* was a level of conscious awareness that allowed them to sustain their intention far more strongly than most of us can even imagine.

*Sustaining* your truth asks you to **cultivate** that level of conscious awareness, a level uncommon in today’s sound-bite world. You can’t “make” it happen. It emerges, from a daily practice of self-reflection – *noticing* what your mind is up to. As you notice more, you become more present – in each moment – which allows you to make conscious choices in each moment ... like choosing to live your own life instead of someone else’s. I know of no other path to get there.

The “trick,” as it were, is that neither your unconscious mind nor the outside world wants you to take a stand for your uniqueness. To the unconscious, it’s *scary*; to the outside world, it’s *incompliant*. These forces are strong deterrents to living your own life, and it’s where many falter or give up. A regular, daily practice of self-reflection changes all that. As you practice cultivation of your awareness, you build the courage to live from what you deeply believe, not from a fear of what you don’t know. Yes, it’s a risk to step into your uniqueness without foreknowledge of the results, yet the trust you’ve built in your inner truth opens you to life’s great teacher ... the natural feedback inherent in the experience of life, feedback that lights your way forward. Both the unconscious mind and the world will continue to try to thwart you; it’s just that you no longer listen to them, because you’ve got something far more interesting to listen to instead.

**Exercise: Intention: Gaining Clarity.** Stop for a few moments of quiet reflection each day. Replay in your mind several conversations from the day. Make sure you include a few that went as you “intended,” as well as a few that didn’t. You might even include a few conversations you had with yourself. Then notice, *now*, both the thinking and the perspective you had, *then*. Notice how thinking and perspective helped form your intention, and therefore, your behavior during the conversation. Notice carefully how *aware* of all this you were – in that moment. No need to judge yourself, or to try to change anything. It’s about learning. As you develop a clearer picture of how awareness and intention are related, you may want to envision how specific conversations might have gone differently had you been more aware, and had you therefore made different choices. Without levying judgment, see if you can demonstrate to yourself that *every* single conversation actually goes just the way you “intend,” even if your intention is chosen unconsciously. (If a conversation ended up “bad,” it’s because your unconscious chose defensiveness, without your awareness.)

Part 2: Experiment. Rushing as we are to “get somewhere” in life, rarely do we know – consciously and deeply – what we truly *want* in life. Without that clarity, we can’t begin to create it. Bring life to a stop for an hour or so a few times a week. Listen deeply to the inner voices that helped you discover your unique truth (parts 1 and 2 of this series); they’ve got messages for you and are waiting for you to hear. (That’s different listening than you do watching TV.) Write what you hear, even if it makes no sense to you. Once you get used to true listening, ask some “big” questions: What do I long for in life? How is my life going now, compared to what matters most to me? How does my thinking keep things just the way they are? Just listen. Over time, clarity will emerge – about your life, work, relationships, this week/day, even this very moment. Eventually you’ll be able to *choose* an intention for every situation, *as* they happen. Remembering your core beliefs adds even more energy, focusing your attention and your intention. If you need a place to start, try these on: (1) I trust myself in an uncertain world; (2) no one can be a better “me” than me; (3) my life represents pure possibility. Big, positive beliefs open you to larger truths, which allow possibility to rush in to fill the new space you’ve created with your thinking. A client remarked recently: “I want to live with *intention*, but without the *tension*.” Game on. When you’re connected with your own truth, nothing can stop you. When you’re not, nothing can make you! Let go of the way it *was*, and step into the world that *could be*.

As a point to ponder while you take on the practices suggested below, consider that we generally view life through one of two “prevailing questions.” Regardless of topic, positive intentions are examples of living *consciously*, from the question, “what’s possible?” instead of *unconsciously*, from the question, “what’s wrong?” This means choosing your intentions based on things like learning, sharing, love, understanding, envisioning life’s potential. These are opposite the far more common intentions we experience (even if unconsciously) every day, including controlling, being right, manipulating, winning, harming, avoiding risk, and any kind of either/or thinking.

**Life lessons from nature:** You won’t find much that seems out of place in nature. It all belongs. A few examples. (1) The Arctic appears to be a hostile, unforgiving environment, yet Arctic fox, polar bears, seals, tundra, climate and sea ice orchestrate a “spiral dance” here that holds the entire Arctic ecosystem together “as one.” (2) In a forest, leaf litter and decaying plant matter are part of the process of *becoming*. What once “was” is transformed into what “comes next.” Nothing is out of place. This is always true when you’re really “*home*.” What this means in our everyday lives is this: when what you *believe, see, think, say* and *do* all match, *you* also orchestrate a spiral dance that holds *you* together “as one.” You’re home; nothing out of place. Everything simply fits. The natural consequences of this place of peace include: (1) never having to remember who you are, simply because the energy of your inner knowing is so powerful, (2) never having to justify yourself, either to anyone else or to yourself, simply because truth is so powerful it doesn’t need to be defended, (3) not having to ‘process’ every request from others, simply because your truth acts like a giant “life filter for the unnecessary,” so you instantly know whether someone’s request fits with your truth or not, (in other words, “no, thank you” becomes your new best friend), and (4) others won’t mess with you much, simply because the energy of your personal presence is so powerful and so clear that the *unconscious* in them will step back from the *conscious* in you.



**Book of the month: *You Are Here***, by Thich Nhat Hanh. If you’ve done the work to truly connect with your uniqueness, this is a pearl of wisdom. If you haven’t, it’s new-age B.S. The point, presented with his usual simplicity: Every day is a gift; we can learn to live in a way that makes joy and happiness possible each day. The true miracle in life is not walking on water or fire, but walking on this earth. He suggests “listening” to the book rather than “reading” it. And if you’re on Cape Cod, you’ll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons; 508-539-6985.