

Saying yes can be energizing, since habitual resistance is a persistent drain on our life energy.

Final Words: Cultivate an internal attitude of "yes" to life and all it brings you. It will save you lots of energy.

From How To Train A Wild Elephant,
Jan Chozen Bays

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See the Color Blue

The Exercise: Become aware of the color blue wherever it appears in your environment. Look not just for the obvious instances, such as the sky, but also for subtle appearances and for all variations of blue.

REMINDING YOURSELF

Put a small dot of blue marker on the back of your hand or inside your wrist. Stick little squares of blue paper up around the house where you'll see them, on doors, on the refrigerator, and so on.

When you notice these reminders, pause for a moment to look around you for the color blue. It could be any tint of blue, and any size from a small dot to a large expanse.

It may help to soften your gaze and "invite" the color blue to appear.

DISCOVERIES

This task was suggested by a student who is an artist and is very aware of colors. When we reported in after a week of doing this task, he explained that he sees blue in every color. Purple, green, brown, and even black shimmer with bits of blue. Most of us found the color blue in many unexpected places. There are so many blues, from subtle to obvious. Softening the gaze brings a luminosity to all colors and forms.

In some languages, the same word is used for both green and blue, or for both black and blue. For example, there is an ancient word and character for blue (*aoi*) in Japanese, but a separate word for green (*midori*) only came into use later, in the Heian period, not appearing in educational materials until the occupation after World War II. In other languages, such as Greek, there are many names for different shades of blue—*thalassi* for sea blue, *ourani* for sky blue, *galzio* for light blue, and so on.

People report that when they remember to look around for the color blue, it seems to pop out at them. Blue objects seem to stand out, as if they have become more three-dimensional. This task also opens up a new appreciation of the sky, the huge bowl of blue that we ignore most of the time even though it is usually a large part of our visual field. The bright blue sky is always above us, even when it is overcast or raining. We realize this when we are flying and the airplane ascends through low-lying clouds and emerges into brilliant sunshine.

DEEPER LESSONS

When we remember to open our awareness to the color blue, it seems to become more vivid and more omnipresent. Of

course, it didn't just become so. It is always sharp and clear. However, it is only when we are mindful that we become aware of its ubiquitous presence in our lives.

How do we know that what I see and call blue is what you are seeing? Each of us lives in our own world, and no one else can enter or experience it fully. The experiences even of identical twins are unique. We are the only one who sees blue as we see it. Similarly, our particular life will never happen again, and we are the only one who can live it fully.

Tibetan Buddhists describe our essential nature as like the sky, vast, luminous, and clear. Meditation helps us reclaim this unbounded mind, which is able to illuminate and see deeply into anything we turn it to. Clearing the mind is similar to our everyday experience with computer screens. We find ourselves completely caught up in the compelling and complex world on the screen. For a while it is our entire reality. Then something pulls us away from the screen—a real person stops by to talk. Our computer screen reverts to a “screen saver,” perhaps a photo of a few white clouds in a bright blue sky. Suddenly our awareness expands and we are lifted above the narrow world of one small glowing screenful of words.

When we find ourselves caught up in the compelling and complex inner screen of our mind, we need to remember that we have an option. We can shrink or “minimize” the current screen down to a small icon on the bottom of the mind-screen and open up the serene blue sky of our inherently boundless, clear mind. A few thoughts drift across the screen, like wispy white clouds. We are lifted above the narrow world of “I, me, and mine” to a place of serenity. The small icon of our worries and plans can be opened up whenever we wish.

Just as the blue sky is always above us, even when we cannot

see it, so it is with our perfect Original Nature. Even when our mind-state is cloudy and our emotions are raining, our Original Nature is always there, shining brightly within us and all things.

Final Words: We can break out of the dark and narrow prison of self-absorbed mind and find freedom in the luminous sky mind.

Bottoms of the Feet

The Exercise: As often as possible during the day, place your awareness in the bottoms of your feet. Become aware of the sensations on the bottoms of the feet such as the pressure of the floor or ground beneath the feet, or the warmth or coolness of the feet. It is particularly important to do so whenever you notice yourself becoming anxious or upset.

REMINDING YOURSELF

The classic method for remembering this task is to put a small stone in your shoe. A less painful, though probably less effective, way is to place notes that say "Feet" where you'll see them, or cutouts of footprints in appropriate locations on the floor. You could also set your cell phone or timer to ring at certain intervals during the day, and whenever you hear the ringer, turn your awareness to the bottoms of your feet.