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inner thoughts



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Foreword

Words escape when feelings engulf, concepts perplex, mysteries bewilder. It seems wrong: if our inner thoughts are the fuel that heats the breath that shapes our voices, then shouldn't we explode when they surge? Shouldn't we become eloquent, profound, verbose?

It can often feel like using a stick to lift water, our attempts to articulate the rumbling, shifting abstracts that flow from our consciousness. They look at you and maybe they get it, but they could never fully understand. Nor can we.

And our words, they soak back in, too. We try to grasp what we cannot even see through our eyes. My guidebook to myself is woefully incoherent and full of ill-conceived characters, plot holes. I contemplate; if only I could comprehend. Luckily, our creatives are not me.

No, they do far better. They speak to family and friends, time and ambitions, the body as a vessel for beauty and protest . . . I can't express much, but I daresay this: I am proud to show you these projections, these shadows on the wall. They may not be exact replicas of our deepest and darkest, but they are very real, and we give these artifacts to you to add, perhaps, to your own flow of shapes and miscellany.

Simon Cheung

Editor, Low Entropy

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“The arrival is always full of expectations. After all, we live far



away from each other, and a mother's heart is always 'tight.'”

Photo by Connor Wilkins

Their Idea of Fun

Daniela Silva

Please note that this article contains brief mention of suicide.

Ah, vacation! You've been working all year, dreaming of this long-awaited break in your routine. And when it comes to vacation, what's the first word that comes to mind?

I have to admit that I have thought of several, such as travel, peace and quiet, rest, joy, and laughter. But I usually don't associate vacation with stress.

We're used to feeling stressed when we work too hard, when we have a disagreement with someone, when we feel depressed or anxious. But we are unlikely to associate periods of stress with vacations. I don't think they really go together, do they?

Well, that's exactly what happened when my husband and I decided to go on a family vacation. We took the car and travelled to the south of Brazil to visit my in-laws.

The arrival is always full of expectations. After all, we live far away from each other, and a mother's heart is always "tight."

But what bothers me most about these family trips are the topics of conversation, always full of tears and regret. Another issue is the fact that my husband and I have a quiet home, with no screaming, children or pets, the opposite of my in-laws' house. In this way, when we're in such a conflicting environment, the clock seems to stop, and the days become years.

The first time I visited my in-laws was in 2008. Like any first time, it was a wonderful trip! I met every member of the family, including brothers-in-law, uncles, cousins and grandparents. We had endless conversations and laughed about everything.

My father-in-law, a photographer for the local newspaper, had taken care to draw up an itinerary of walks around the town. We even had a "tour guide" to make it even more interesting. I visited museums, crystal-clear fountains, typical food, parks and even an archaeological site! I remember not wanting to leave. So what's changed?

Nothing, really. I'm the one who's changed. The truth is that after my mum died in 2015, I decided I would no longer be involved in any illness, including conversations, complaints or news of someone in pain.

In contrast, my mother-in-law has become a carer for her mother and her husband. According to her, her life is

“all about illness and doctors,”

and this includes talking about cancer, strokes, her alcoholic son and any other illnesses that arise.

Even with all this, I thought we were going to go out for a walk, visit the rest of the city, meet new people: in short, I thought I was going to have fun. After all, it was vacation!

But the most bizarre thing was yet to come: we took a walk through the cemetery. I remember saying out loud, “I bought new clothes to go out in, but I didn’t wear them.”

My mother-in-law said, “Then we must go out.”

In fact, we never went out. I left the cemetery feeling as dead as those who lived in coffins.

When everyone gets together, there’s no good that can come of it.

After an atypical afternoon at the cemetery, I had a shower to get the “dead energy” out of my body, and met my family for dinner. Dinner at my in-laws’ house is always delicious, consisting of barbecue, rice, mayonnaise and salad. But believe me, the good taste of the food can turn sour from one hour to the next, depending on the conversation during the meal.

My brother-in-law arrived for dinner and started defending an idea that my father-in-law didn’t agree with. The conversation became heated as my mother-in-law spoke her mind and raised her voice. My brother-in-law got up, red and almost out of breath, and decided to go for a walk to cool off, refreshing his stomach with a cold beer. My husband and I got up from the table, annoyed, and went to bed hungry.

Another day, another story, and another opportunity to go for a walk. We went to visit a very dear

aunt who always welcomes us at her house. I was prepared to have a good laugh, because she’s a very funny person. In addition to me, my husband and his parents, there were also two uncles and a cousin at the house. The meeting, which was supposed to be relaxed, became as tense as a wake.

My husband’s cousin started the conversation, with everyone sitting in a circle in the yard, and addressing my husband, said, “You don’t know who killed himself last week.”

The phrase sent a chill down my spine, and I ended up choking on the cup of tea I was drinking. I noticed that everyone around me was listening to my cousin’s story in a strange and natural way, as if someone was narrating the last chapter of a soap opera. At that moment, for the first time in my life, I put my hand on my conscience and asked myself,

“What am I doing here?”

Really? Is this what you call life here? Is it healthy to rejoice in the misfortune of others? Is talking endlessly about the year’s latest illnesses and doctor’s appointments a way of enjoying a little nostalgia? Only if you’re trying to kill life, I thought.

Going back home has taught me some great lessons: have your own life project and be an interesting person, or you’ll end up being a self-serving one; life is too short! So instead of spending the rest of your days sitting in a chair talking bad about yourself and others, choose to get up and do something constructive, like developing a hobby or learning a new trade.

Another thing: travelling to see family can be as stressful as working all day. So enjoy it in moderation.

**GUR-
LEEN
KAUR
BAJWA**

Both a prolific reader and writer, Gurleen likes living inside exciting stories. She’s working on making her own the most exciting of all.

Where The Sky Met The Ground

Gurleen Kaur Bajwa

Lani had known it the moment her foot planted on the synthetic red rubber. The angle was odd. Awkward. Unnatural. She’d known the instant the shoe met the ground. Before her knee even had a chance to hyperextend and drive the femur down into the tibia. Before the pain exploded deep within the joint and snapped across the bone. Before anything, Lani had known.

Her arm had been stretched out, ready to take the baton. And then she collapsed, a scream ripping from her lungs. It was fast. Faster than she could reason. Perhaps someday, when she was older, she would be able to play the moment back on a reel and pick apart the split seconds. In the hundreds of cameras of parents and students, there would surely be one that captured the exact split second. And perhaps someday she would watch it. But for now, Lani lay dazedly watching the sky as people rushed to her side. And she felt a tear slip past her eyes.

Tibial plateau fracture. Lani wasn’t told much else after the surgery. *Tibial plateau fracture.* She rolled the syllables on her tongue. Unfamiliar. It meant things. Things far into the future. About how she would walk a year from now. Ten years from now. She didn’t understand all of it, but she understood one thing. It was over. Everything was over.

Her parents took it well. Or they said they did. Lani doubted it held true outside her sight-line. Her mother worked with a forced, cheerful vigor as she emptied out years of training journals and medals (“Out of sight, out of mind!”). Her father made several suggestions about being overdue for a European trip. Even friends came to visit at home,

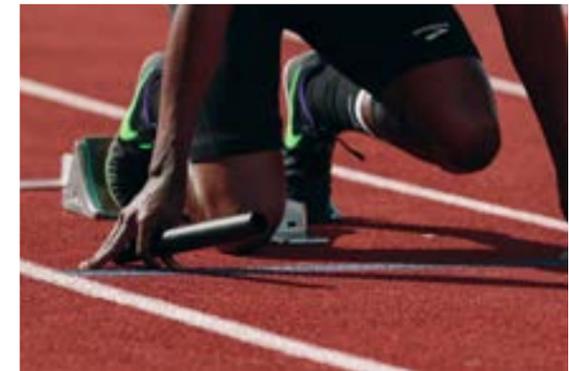


Photo by Braden Collum

sitting around her in half-circles, with half-hearted words of encouragement and cheer. Lani spoke little. She listened, but she said little. She found herself strangely incapable of doing much else for the seven weeks of recovery post surgery. Most of the time was spent rotting on the sofa, staring at the birds outside the front windows. They jumped from branch to branch, at ease. Lani had an odd thought as she watched them. She wished she’d fallen a step forward and broken her neck instead.

The first step outside the cast was painful. As was the second. And the third. The knee neither flexed or extended. The muscles were tight and unmoving. And the skin was white. Useless. By the 14th step, Lani had stopped.

“Once you start therapy, it . . . it will get better!” her mother assured Lani, though her face had lost all its blood.

**DAN-
IELA
SILVA** Daniela Silva is a Brazilian education and mental health writer who lives with her husband in Goiânia, Brazil. She holds a BA in education, an MBA in human resource management and a postgraduate certificate in neuroeducation. She has been working as an educational writer since 2012.

Lani did not reply. She did not care if it got better. It did not matter, because it would never be the same. And if it would not be the same, it did not matter and Lani did not care.

School was different from this side. Seven weeks had brought in the new year, and new life to the parched grounds. The colors of the flowers and grass were fuller, more luscious and reminiscent of children's cartoons. Lani's eyes were able to see that. But the world was drabber in a way, Lani thought, though it had never been that bright to begin with.

"We combine all the like terms," Mr. Ahn said, marker drawing across the board. "And bring them to one side."

"Your drawings of the inner vasculature of a plant will be due by Friday." Mrs. Davis said.

"There is a take-home quiz on volumetric pressure—"

"Please get your forms signed—"

"Finish reading the second act by—"

"How are you getting on?"

Lani didn't hear it at first, and Coach Kells had to repeat her question, knuckles rapping on the table.

Lani blinked. Her hand rested on top of her knee. The bones were uneven.

"Fine," she said. Coach Kells shifted uncomfortably and Lani wondered if her parents had put him up to it. After all, there was little Coach Kells had to do with Lani anymore. He must have been disappointed too, in hindsight. After everything that he had done to bring her this far, to come this far to only have come this far.

"You've missed quite a bit of school," Kells said.

"Your homeroom teacher said you've been struggling a bit."

It hadn't mattered before, Lani thought. She had never done well in school. But no one had cared then. They cared now. Perhaps Lani should too. She would never run—not really run—so this was what was left for her. Forever. Mediocrity.

"Do you have time after school? The peer-tutoring club has students who . . ."

Lani tuned him out. The bones under her hand had not fused the same. She wondered, if she broke it again—there was a large staircase on the back entrance of the school—whether it would grow back right this time.

And if not, maybe she could break it again. And again. Until it was finally fixed.

She'd never used the library. Other than blocks between classes, or before the start of school after track meets, Lani did not believe she'd ever even visited it. It was quiet this time of day, save for the faint sound of sneakers and laughter passing under the doors. Students heading home. Lani felt the sensation of being left behind. Dust layered over the books. No one read these. They'd been left behind too.

Lani let her hand rest on the spines.

Breaking Bad Habits

How to Own Your Voice

The Procrastination Productivity Pendulum

A Teen's Guide to Making Friends

"Need help in that department?"

Lani jerked back. It wasn't enough. But even if Lani had jumped a mile back, perhaps it would still not have been enough.

A boy, taller than her, stood where she had a second ago. His hand lifted the book from the shelf, reading the cover.

"A *Teen's Guide to Making Friends*," he read, amused. "How to live it up in the best years of your life."

Lani stared. His hair was auburn, eyes just lighter. The top button of his uniform shirt was unbuttoned, the tie loosened. *Handsome*, she stared. In a pretty sort of a way.

"Must be dire if we're referring to the self-help section," he tsked, sliding the book back before returning to her with a grin.

Lani felt something hot on her cheeks and looked away.

Noah wasn't what she had expected. Though she hadn't known she'd expected anything until she'd seen him. Glasses, for one, had been an expectation. A prim and proper uniform with a tie that suffocated his neck. And certainly no piercings. Lani stared at them as Noah explained the arithmetic problem. Two, above his right brow. She wondered if they'd hurt.

"It's the same as looking for the lowest common denominator—"

His eyes flickered up, so she looked down at the worksheet.

"—except with variables. Does that make sense?"

No.

"Yes."

He gave her the pencil, and then watched expectantly. Lani tried very hard to seem indifferent. The Xs, squared and otherwise, rotated around her head. She lifted and dropped the pencil to the paper. *I don't know*, she realized, and the thought made her throat dry. It was an embarrassing realization, with Noah's eyes on her so intently. She was stupid and now this (pretty) stranger would know that too. She should have said no when Coach suggested it. She should have found the strength to speak it. To refuse. To go back to rotting on that sofa, where she would be the rest of her life. Her knee gave a twang of pain to remind her it was still there. Still useless. She was still useless.

There was a tap on Lani's forehead. She started, looking up. It brought her face to face with Noah.

"Don't overthink it," he said, with a smile. "If you do it wrong, you can just start over."

They were too close. She could see the piercings. The flecks in his eyes. Eyelashes that would have had adults swooning over him as a child. *Pretty*, Lani thought.

Noah blinked. Then burst out into laughter.

"Am I?"

Lani lost all ability to speak.

They caught the last bus, just barely. It was Noah who had to run ahead, until the driver saw them and slowed to a stop. He held a hand to her from the steps, an unnecessary gesture. And Lani saw his eyes flicker down to her knee. Lani thought she should feel embarrassed again. But she somehow didn't. She didn't need the help, but

she reached for his hand anyways.

They stood side by side on the crowded bus. The sunset sank in the distance, and strangers chatted on either side. Wind blew up the leaves as the bus stopped at a light. Lani's shoulder brushed against Noah's. Noah tilted his head down, and grinned at her.

"Pretty," she said.

His smile slackened and then came back in a full laugh, eyes crinkling at the corners.

Start over, Lani thought, hand tightening around the handle. Her knee throbbed, but she let it. Let's start over.

“I was afraid to find out the diagnosis [...] I just savored every moment in the unknown”

Beauty and Dignity in Everything

Olena Seredova

Photo by
Meredith
Spence

Maria and I have been friends for 24 years, and we have probably talked about everything. Believe me, having such a conversation partner is a privilege. We exchange books, discuss authors, share links to lectures and reflect on each other's experiences.

At the start of winter, Maria called me after quite a long break. At first there was small talk, and then . . .

Maria said, “Something happened to me in November. I found a lump in my breast. A very large one.”

I gasped. “Darling, why didn't you call me right away?!”

“Everything turned out fine,” she reassured me. “But it was a crazy experience. It happened over the weekend, and I couldn't book an appointment with my family doctor, so I spent two days googling everything I could find. I practically drove myself into a panic attack—I couldn't sleep, couldn't function. I was already mentally writing my will. You know how cancer runs in my family.”

Then Maria told me about the battle that started inside her and how

her entire sense of meaning began to shift.



On one hand, fear consumed everything—it was all she could think about. But at the same time, daily routines and responsibilities remained, and she had to keep going. Strangely, though, they no longer felt as burdensome. They didn't take up as much mental space. She kept taking the kids to activities, doing grocery runs and writing out the weekly schedule. But it all felt like a movie. She didn't know—would this week be like any other? Would there even be another week?

Then came the doctor's appointment. He shook his head, nodded, but made no predictions, only deepening her anxiety. He ordered tests, launching her into a long cycle of scheduling appointments and waiting for results. Two unforgettable weeks passed before she met with the doctor again.

Maria told me, “Ellen, I slipped into the strangest state. The fear started to fade, replaced by wonder and awe. I had never experienced life so vividly—at least, not in the way I had thought life was meant to be enjoyed. This wasn't like relaxation, achievement or even sex. It was an entirely different level of joy and acceptance. Maybe this is what Joe Dispenza and Joe Vitale wrote about.

I watched my children eat, and for the first time, I wasn't thinking, ‘Hurry up, time is passing—Polina needs to wash her hair, Kolya has to practice his instrument.’ I saw them in the now. I looked at them as if for the first time.

Polina's hair was so beautiful. She ate so gracefully. Nikolay furrowed his brow in such a particular way . . . had I ever really seen my children?

Or had I only known what they needed to do?

I looked out at the November morning. Not once did I think, ‘God, how dreary.’ I had never looked at the sky this way before, never breathed like this. I felt an incredible connection to everything, a vastness, an inner spaciousness. I listened to Dima (my husband) for real. I wasn't rushing. I wasn't multitasking. It was even better than being in love—because I wasn't focused on just one person. I saw beauty and dignity in everything. There was no autopilot. None at all.

And inside, I changed. I wasn't criticizing myself, wasn't overanalyzing past conversations, wasn't thinking about what I should have said or done differently. None of that mattered anymore. The only thing that mattered was that everything simply was—imperfect, messy and beautiful in its own way.

Those days stretched endlessly. I was afraid to find out the diagnosis, to face the final answer, so I just savored every moment in the unknown, deeply aware of its fragility. I noticed how this fear somehow centered me. I stopped being pulled into the future or the past. Under the imagined axe of impending death, the possibility of saying goodbye to this world, everything became deeply meaningful.

And then . . . after two weeks, when I learned that everything was fine, that there was no threat . . . I walked out of the doctor's office with tears in my eyes, determined that I would live like this forever.

But three or four days later—poof. The old way of being started creeping back. First in small moments, then more and more often. The rush, the roles, the masks, the narrowed perspective. Life shrank again—to the office, to the upcoming week, to the concert on Saturday.

But why? I breathed, I meditated, I wanted so badly to hold onto it! And yet, somehow, with ‘normal’ life came the veil of routine, the dullness, the unconsciousness. Ellen, does it really take fear to awaken this state? Why isn't pure reason enough to keep it alive?”

God, if only I knew! I've listened to gurus, practiced meditation, fasted, chased adrenaline, traveled to sacred places. And I can't say these things don't work. But despite decades of searching, I only catch glimpses of this state—sometimes for moments, sometimes for hours, occasionally for days. But I can't hold onto it. I can't root myself in it.

This story shook me out of my own fog of unconsciousness. So what's the secret? Does accepting the inevitable lead to serenity?

Is it detachment from outcomes? Acceptance of death?

Maybe the samurai had it right?

We talked about it, reminisced, reflected. But we didn't find an answer. I don't understand this paradox. Why does life appear so vivid when seen through the lens of death?

Maybe you know? Tell me.

A Glimpse of Christmas

Balreet Sidhu



If I Could Time Travel

Makayla Anderson

If I could time travel,
I'd walk through the echoes of yesterday,
Tracing the paths where dreams once grew,
Where laughter lingered, and tears fell like rain.
I'd find the moments left unfinished,
And whisper to my younger self:
"Keep going—your strength will surprise you."

If I could time travel,
I'd journey to a future unwritten,
Where hope shines like constellations in the night.
I'd touch the hands of who I've yet to become,
Feel the warmth of dreams realized,
And carry that spark back to today,
A reminder that the best is still to come.

If I could time travel,
I'd pause in the moments that mattered most,
Hold tighter, love deeper, and speak softer.
I'd linger in the silence of sunsets,
Knowing the fleeting beauty of their glow.
I'd find the courage to say what went unsaid,
And let go of what was never mine to keep.

But here I stand, rooted in the now,
No machine to take me forward or back.
And yet, I hold the power to create,
To make today the memory I'll cherish,
To shape tomorrow with the seeds I plant.
If I could time travel,
I'd still choose today to begin again.

A Reflection on Time

Time is both a gift and a mystery—a thread connecting all that was, is, and will be. While we can't rewrite the past or leap into the future, we can shape our present. What would you say to your younger self? What hope would you whisper to the person you are becoming?

Every day is an opportunity to time travel differently: to learn from yesterday, dream of tomorrow, and live fully in the now. So ask yourself: *What legacy will today leave for your future self?*

Jayne Seagrave is a BC bestselling author. The ninth edition of her book *Camping British Columbia, the Rockies and the Yukon* was published by Heritage House in April 2023. Over 60,000 of her camping books have been sold. She also writes fiction, non-fiction and freelance articles, and occasionally teaches writing and publishing courses. Recently retired, she spends her free time travelling internationally and in the province she adores, learning the French language, exercising, and writing.

THE ORGASM

Jayne Seagrave

There was a tension, a tension between her body and her mind. The body wanted satisfaction, it wanted to glow, to feel complete, excited, loved and then, as a result, to sleep. It wanted an orgasm. But the mind rationally reminded this was not easily possible, and if attempted would only result, as it had before, in a sense of loss. Her mind was not in the right place. It would be mechanical. It would not be fulfilling. It would result in disappointment.

Her fingers descended downwards, confirming there was little desire, nothing moist, no fluids running, no wetness, little indication this would be little more than a wasted effort. But why not try? Laying back she attempted to gently tease the clitoris, labia and vulva, helping to increase the flow of blood, the swelling, the secretion of juices. It did not happen easily or quickly.

It did, eventually, slowly start to happen.

Extensive reading had informed her that the clitoris has over a thousand nerve endings, more than any other part of the body, with its only function being to increase sexual pleasure. Such a small, compact

body part. Such an important one. It lay dormant until touched and caressed, how strange was that? She thought of this as she as beginning to enjoy what she was now successfully doing to herself. Her fingers were moist, and her mind focused on the object of her desire. Thousands of miles away, there was a man, somewhat difficult to visualise, but present in this act. In successfully imagining they were his fingers, his strokes, his explorations, her excitement at last took hold.

Spreading her legs and twisting slightly to one side, she gently moved in a slow rhythmic motion as her sexual organs became wet and her breathing audible. It was not easy, there was almost a resistance that she did not fully understand. Her body was taking part, but her mind was still not completely there, and this was difficult to ignore. Stroking her nipples did little to help, shifting and moving more intensely, raising her hips and then crossing one leg over the other and continuing the fingering also caused no significant improvement. She knew she would reach orgasm, it had gone too far, but it was not easy.



Photo by
Unsplash

She changed position again. One hand separated the labia while the other played and caressed the clitoris, now large and hard. And her accomplice reappeared. This action worked. One of the bricks in the wall broke free and the cascade slowly started. Anticipation. The best moment.

The time when you could not stop, but you could delay.

The time when, in resisting, the pleasure increased. Mind and body were now on the same side, working in unison. There was only one objective. Another brick displaced and another and another as the orgasm advanced. No stopping. Let it happen. The wall collapsed. She cried out a little, breathing heavily and groaning as the crescendo rose and fell. Objective achieved.

Laying on her back, she only became aware of the tears when they ran into her ears. There had been an orgasm, she should be content. But there was something missing. There was a body missing. There was, missing, the warm flesh of another, stroking and holding and lightly kissing, offering continued affec-

tion after the orgasm had been achieved. Tonight's event was a selfish, personal action, performed in an anomic bedroom with little emotion. It was not a shared one. Her reluctant mind had been right, rather than leaving her content, it left her empty, disappointed, sad.

There was, however, no regret. It was a learning experience. On this occasion, masturbation could not compensate for "the real thing," and if it is possible to access the genuine encounter, with a warm real body, whose hands and tongue and person can unpredictably play with the body in unanticipated, exciting ways, then this should be pursued. And if this is delayed for a few weeks, then so be it.

Better to wait. Better to feel the disappointment

especially if it does succeed in producing sleep.

And it did produce sleep . . .

Artistry with- in Reality

Alex Andy Phuong

Marvel at the beauty
Within the world as a whole
While delving deep
Into the depths of the soul,
And let the heart soar
While striving for more
As a way to prepare
For whatever the future has in store,
And then dare to dream
No matter how hard life might seem,
And understand the nature
Of being a human being
As a way to feel alive
As well as stay pure
By giving oneself the opportunity
To endure for sure

**ALEX
ANDY
PHUONG**

Alex Andy Phuong earned his bachelor of arts in English from California State University, Los Angeles in 2015. Emma Stone inspired him to write passionately after he heard the song "Audition (The Fools Who Dream)" from *La La Land*.

The Heart of the Matter

Anna Mallikarjunan

Why does life so often feel scattered and ungrounded? We are like leaves in an autumnal wind, fluttering sails on the high seas, at times dispersed, at times without direction, groping in the darkness of our inner environment, anxious about the uncertainty of our outer circumstances. Now, when I use the pronouns *we* and *our*, it is neither because I generalize nor because I claim the oneness of all life. It is because somewhere, deep down, I know I am not independent and that I cannot survive as a separate entity—either physically or psychologically. So it is hardly surprising that in trying to find wholeness and clarity, being unable to find it myself, I look for sources of inspiration and guidance. My questions may differ from yours, and so also our responses, but we share the human existence. In that spirit, perhaps you will bear with me and read on.

First, I find that daily life is dominated by the past. By this, I mean that every thought, feeling and action stems either from knowledge or experience—we rarely ever live in the present. This clouding over of our existence by the past is difficult to recognize, but it is a habit that humans have cultivated over centu-

**ANNA
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Anna writes from her love for the natural world, lessons from her journey through illness and trauma, and gratitude for the wisdom of the ancients. Her essays have appeared in literary magazines and eco-conscious journals. Originally from South India, she presently lives in Montreal (Tiohtià:ke), on the unceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka.

ries. So much so that it can take a shock to bring our attention to the present moment. Knowledge and experience have a vital place in practical matters where clear, rational thinking is essential. But when thinking begins to govern us, it creates and strengthens a centre from which all separative, self-centered activity emerges. Thinking, then, overwhelms insight and pure observation; it leaves us confused and distorted. Only when we slow ourselves down gently and gradually and find the space to observe do we begin to notice how conditioned our lives are. A life dominated by the influence of the past—which means thinking and feeling our way through each day without self-awareness—damages the body and mind and imprisons the heart.

Second, most of us are caught in identification—with physical sensations, ideas, roles, beliefs, ambitions, habits, desires and fears. This self-interest defines us, and we sustain a limited, unstable identity through habitual interest and attention. Any limitation, whether noble or coarse, keeps us bound and prevents intelligence in thought and action. Discovery of the symptoms may not cure us of the affliction immediately, but it opens the door to sanity. And the

task of breaking through our bondage is impossible without the compassionate guidance of a sagacious presence. One such path is called *sadhana*. *Sadhana*, a Sanskrit word meaning practice or discipline, refers to the undertaking of any activity that enriches us. In this context, I use it to refer to a discipline in which we become aware of our daily lives and activities. By gradually expanding and deepening the field of awareness around the centre of our personal universe, we allow an impersonal space to emerge as the background of our existence. The strength and intensity of *sadhana* depend largely on the

strength and intensity of our self-centered habits.

Bhakti (devotion) is another means to free ourselves from the perilous liaisons we have built. Here, I must introduce the word spirituality, albeit hesitantly. For I find that the word meets opposing responses—cynicism and skepticism on the one hand and naivety and gullibility on the other. And yet, spirituality is still the heart of many societies. Often communicated through the words and lyrics of poems and songs, the essence of ancient Indian spirituality has been handed down

from one generation to the next and kept alive through music, dance, drama and discourses. In many a poem or prayer, the supplicant uses a source of inspiration to bridge

the abyss between oneself as an ego and a universal,

all-pervasive entity. The term ego here refers to the notion of a separate existence, the feeling that “I” am a separate, independent entity. The supplicant finds inspiration in various ways—through an embodiment of esteem or a benevolent protector, an element of nature like the sun, or a beloved sage who illuminates the path to freedom. The figure of inspiration is as much metaphorical as physical. Recognizing its purely symbolic nature is at the heart of true devotion.

The question I ask now is: Has human life strayed far from its primordial relationship with the universe? And therefore, am I just scratching the surface of real discovery? Will I ever be able to feel, deeply and enduringly, the words of a great sage, that *living is life’s only purpose?*

“Finally, a politician who listens...”

PRESS RELEASE

Jayne Seagrave

This year—like most years—I’m planning a road trip in BC. But this year will be different . . . this year I’ll be Camping for Canada.

Like many others, I am deeply hurt by Trump’s tariff decisions and treatment of my country. In reacting, then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stressed that Canadians needed to explore their own country this summer, and not vacation in the United States. And *he actually mentioned Canadians needed to explore provincial and national park camping* . . . at last! I have been advocating this for over 25 years. Finally, a politician who listens . . .

In these times when we all want to “do our bit,” here are my 10 tips on taking a camping holiday in BC’s provincial and national parks this summer:

1. Start planning now. Decide when you want to vacation. If you have school-aged children, time is limited, but for those who do not have restrictions, think September—for me the best time to camp—or April/May/June.
2. Visit the BC Parks website (www.bcparks.ca) to review campgrounds, or if you prefer to read hard-

copy, see the free camping guides available in tourism offices in BC (*Go Camping BC* and *Super Camping*), or obtain books from the library (e.g. my own *Camping British Columbia*). For national parks, see www.parkscanada.ca

3. Make a reservation (www.bcparks.ca/reservations). It is important to get dates fixed as soon as you can. Act now. Reservations can be made four months in advance and can be changed and cancelled.

4. Consider camping away from the crowded Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and Okanagan—drive to Northern BC or the Rockies and Kootenays. In my opinion, the extra kilometers are well worth the effort.

5. Should the thought of two weeks in a tent be equivalent to putting hot needles in your eyes, consider three nights camping, then two nights in a hotel/motel. The best of both worlds.

6. If you are not a camper, provincial parks provide perfect picnic spots during road trips or day trips. Buy Tim Hortons (what could be more Canadian?), sand-

Photo by
Subhadeep
Saha



wiches and drinks, and stop at a provincial or national park to use the picnic tables and washrooms, and hike, swim or fish while you're there. Parking is free.

7. Consider renting a recreational vehicle and completing a road trip in BC. There are a number of RV rental companies, many which offer one-way rentals (e.g. Calgary to Vancouver) and low season rates.

8. National parks (and a few provincial parks) also provide fully furnished and equipped cottages. For example, Manning Park has a range of cabins and an on-site restaurant and bar, pool and hot tub, in addition to awesome hikes and lake swimming and fishing. Who needs Yosemite when we have this on our doorstep?

9. If you do not have camping equipment, consider renting it, borrowing it from friends, or buying second-hand.

10. Be social and book a "group campsite" and encourage your family and friends to take part and

share the expense. For 10 years I did this at Alice Lake Provincial Park, an easy 90-minute drive from Vancouver, and took my family and another five families.

So why not Camp for Canada? Yes, there could be forest fires that put an end to or alter your camping plans. Yes, there could be extreme temperatures (a good reason to head north). Yes, if it is your first time, there will be challenges. But in my opinion, the advantages will far outweigh the disadvantages. You will be supporting the Canadian economy in every way. You will not have to pay in US dollars. You will be visiting Canadian museums, heritage sites, restaurants, coffee bars and/or hot springs, maybe for the first time. and you and your family's knowledge of this awesome, breathtaking country will increase. You will be doing your bit.

