

# The Wise Brain Bulletin

News and Tools for Happiness, Love, and Wisdom  
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*Featured Article:*

## Love: Intimacy & Autonomy

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Love tends to join and hate to separate, but joining is not the same as love, and separation is not hatred. Sometimes the most loving thing a person can do is take a step back: that's distance in the service of attachment. And it's not loving to join in invasive or smothering ways. Most people want both closeness and independence. Intimacy and autonomy in all their forms: your course in life is shaped by how well you regulate their dance in your mind, and their expression in your relationships.

### ***Intimacy and Autonomy at Odds***

Harms can be done to yourself and others in the name of each, so it's important to bring their dynamics into the sphere of your virtue. For example, Martin Buber described three types of relationships:

- **I-Thou**—When I relate to you with respect as an independent being (like a dear friend)
- **I-It**—When I treat you as a means to my ends (like, perhaps, an operator you're calling for a phone number)
- **It-It**—When you and I are just bodies in space (like strangers in an elevator)

We mistreat others by making them an "It" to our "I." You know what that feels like on the receiving end: like you are being seduced, pitched, or used. Not good. It's not uncommon to treat people as "Its" in order to feel close to them, such as by compelling their attention, making them feel bad for wanting their own space, manipulating their affection, not respecting their boundaries,

*continued on page 2...*

### **Also in this issue:**

#### ***The Great Love***

By Tara Mohr

p. 7



#### ***Words of Wisdom Heart to Heart***

p. 10

continued from page 1...

or in the extreme, some kinds of sexual abuse. And certainly common to treat people as “Its” to make it easier to act freely: examples include dumping negative emotions without caring about the impacts, trampling on people to get ahead, or simply cutting in line.

## Intimacy and Autonomy Working Together

On the other hand, intimacy and autonomy are channels for expressing your natural goodness. For example, being kind toward someone naturally involves both an affinity with that person and a certain autonomy for the kindness to be genuine. Besides its obvious rewards in everyday life, intimacy supports personal growth and spiritual practice through bringing you into relationship with things. Into relationship with your innermost experience and that of the people around you: the joys and sorrows, the suffering and its causes and what leads to its ending. Into compassion, kindness, and service: Love thy neighbor as thyself. Into relationship with a supportive community.

And—if it’s meaningful to you—into relationship with God. Autonomy, too, supports personal growth and spiritual practice. For example, in

### Greetings

The Wise Brain Bulletin offers skillful means from brain science and contemplative practice—to nurture your brain for the benefit of yourself and everyone you touch.

The Bulletin is offered freely, and you are welcome to share it with others. Past issues are archived at [www.WiseBrain.org](http://www.WiseBrain.org).

Rick Hanson, PhD and Richard Mendius, MD edit the Bulletin, and it’s designed and laid out by Brad Reynolds at [BradleyYes@aol.com](mailto:BradleyYes@aol.com).

To subscribe, please contact Rick at [dr rh@comcast.net](mailto:dr rh@comcast.net).

Buddhism, you are supposed to “see for yourself” and make your own decisions about what makes sense to you. It is up to you, and no one else, to engage the path of awakening. It is you who will inherit the results of your actions, good or bad.

Intimacy and autonomy are often seen as opposite ends of the same continuum, so that as one increases the other diminishes (see Figure 1). The classic example is, “Getting married means giving up my independence.” Less dramatically, people have understandable fears that if they express their deepest truth, others will leave them – or if they get really close emotionally, they’ll lose some of their own identity.



Figure 1

But intimacy need not undermine autonomy, and vice versa; in fact, they support each other. Intimacy fosters autonomy since repeated experiences of caring connection, particularly in childhood, are critical for the development of normal ego functions, personal worth, and confidence; healthy relationships provide the “secure base” from which we engage the world as an individual. Autonomy – both yours and the other person’s – nurtures intimacy in many ways, including its reassurance that you can still protect yourself when you’re wide open to another person, and by giving an extra oomph to relatedness: it makes such a difference when you know that the other person really wants to be with you.

## Patterns of Closeness and Independence

Actually, intimacy and autonomy are independent dimensions, and it is their combination that counts, as you can see in Figure 2.

High I and High A	Integrated
High I and Low A	Engulfed
Low I and High A	Isolated
Low I and low A	Adrift

Figure 2

continued on next page...

The qualities in each quadrant, imperfectly summarized by the single word inside, characterize both types of individuals and, more importantly, states of mind we all transit:

- **Integrated**—Comfortable and skillful with both closeness and agency; able both to carry others in her heart while pursuing her own aims, and to be completely authentic in the most intimate moments; symbolically, “you” and “I” are about the same size.
- **Engulfed**—Highly connected, but not free to act or express himself fully; giving up “me” is price to be “we;” unnecessarily dependent; clutching, beseeching, placating; could resist encouragement to be more independent; “you” are big and “I” am small.
- **Isolated**—Strong sense of personal desires but weak connections with others; a solitary captain with a firm hand on the rudder; could be prickly about bids for closeness or seeming infringements on her prerogatives; “you” are small and “I” am big.
- **Adrift**—Dissociated from both others and oneself; unresponsive and passive ; alone in a boat with no direction; “you” are small and “I” am small.

Of these four, the Integrated mode of being clearly brings the most benefits to you and to others, it is the best foundation for personal growth and spiritual practice, and it involves the most complex forms of neural regulation. To feel safe in the deep end of the pool of intimacy, a person needs to be able to speak her own truth and be comfortable with closeness – so let’s start there.

### **Authentic Self-Expression**

**I**magine telling someone in an important relationship that you feel let down, or need to apologize, or feel angry, or want to get emotionally or physically closer.

Did you have any reactions inside when you imagined saying those things?

In the mind, there is a typical sequence:

- Expression —An emotion, desire, opinion, action

- Concern—It will be unwanted; it will lead to criticism, anger, punishment, abandonment; “I’ll look bad”
- Defense— Silence, suppression, denial, vagueness, intellectualization (e.g., describing an emotion in a very detached way), distraction, compromise (e.g., bickering as a way to connect and distance at the same time), changing the subject

Much of the time, the Concern and Defense reactions happen so quickly—often in less than a second – that they’re hardly noticed. Yet they routinely filter, twist, or suppress a person’s expression of his or her true self. The result is a polite mask, a persona, that is not a lie but is far from the full truth. When two people communicate this way, it becomes a relatively distant relationship: it could have consideration and good behavior, but not much emotional intimacy.



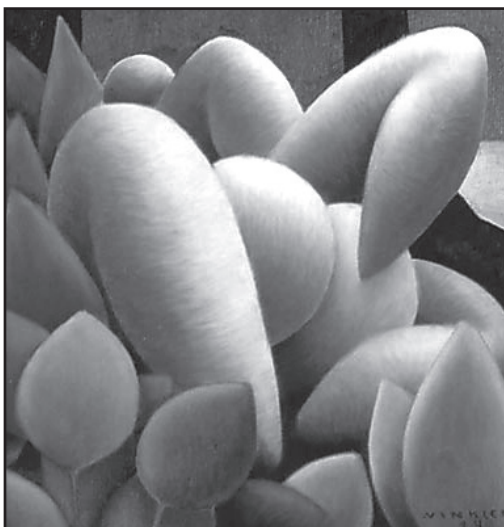
In many real-world situations, concerns about full expression are warranted; most business meetings are not places to spill your guts, certain people will mis-use what you tell them, and sometimes we know there’s no point in disturbing the peace with a parent or other relative. But even when the manner and content of what you have to say are truly fine, inhibitions from previous life experiences, particularly in childhood, create bottlenecks for self-expression.

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## The Impact of Experiences

Children express what they feel and what they want through their actions, emotions, signals, and, by their second birthday, words. Then people respond, including their parents, teachers, and other children; responses can be active or passive, verbal or nonverbal, positive or negative. These interactive episodes are usually brief, so there are a lot of them each day. For example, from multiple studies, a reasonable estimate is that a typical toddler has his or her wants thwarted about twenty times an hour, or an average of once every three minutes. Whether it's called for or not, each thwarting is a communication, a message, to the child: "No." Then there are other messages: parents who come to a fussing baby in the middle of the night, children at school who let a new kid into their group, people who listen when you're upset: "Yes." Added to your personal experiences are the ones you witnessed: what happened when your siblings (if you had any) expressed themselves, and other children, and adults – and characters, real or fictional, in books, movies, and other media.

This learning about self-expression continues into adulthood and to this day. Throughout it, your brain's negativity bias has highlighted episodes when self-expression led to painful feelings. The pain could be quite subtle, like mild dismay when a person's eyes wander away while you're speaking, or quite intense, like being spanked for mouthing off at a parent. In neural networks, the types of self-expression that led to pain became quickly associated with fear, and then with rewards like relief when you learned to inhibit them.



## Inhibition Profiles

The inhibition profile of a particular person can be quite nuanced. For example, in terms of attachment theory, a person raised by a "dismissing" parent could worry about asking too much of others, and someone with an "inconsistent" parent—alternately intrusive and rejecting—could feel ashamed or guilty about desires that differ from those of her partner. Or, as a generalization, boys are socialized not to show fear, girls not to show anger; since what people do not express tends to build up inside, I've counseled relationships in which the man is anxious about the woman, and she's irritated with him. I've also worked with people who:

- Can express "armored" emotions like anger but not more vulnerable ones like hurt or sadness
- Cannot say "no," so their "yes" doesn't mean much.
- Think they are not allowed to say what they really want.
- Feel tongue-tied around authority figures.
- Get really upset with themselves at the least anger toward their spouse.
- Feel that acknowledging problems with a spiritual teacher would be disloyal.

These are completely normal inhibitions. For example, I sweated for about half an hour before

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I finally told a girl—for the first time in my life—that I loved her.

What about you? What's your own history, related to self-expression? What do you find easy to say—or hard?



### **Helping Yourself Speak Your Truth**

**N**ormal as they are, these inhibitions limit your autonomy, and consequently, your intimacy. Their regulation is excessive and thus unskillful. And they harm others by denying them important information about how you are feeling and what you really care about. Here are some ways to deal with them:

1. Draw on the slow but powerful prefrontal cortex to keep reminding yourself that you are entitled to the pursuit of your own happiness, to your own experience, and your own view—and that you will communicate in a virtuous manner. It could help to write out a kind of manifesto—usually for your eyes alone—declaring what is fair and just for you in your relationships. In actual conversations, particularly if they are over the phone or via email or texting, you could set your manifesto, or even just a few jotted notes, in front of yourself. The clarity in explicit language is a kind of secure base that establishes the moral, principled rationale for your self-expression.

2. Similarly, remind yourself that you are responsible for conducting yourself in an honorable way, but not for all the other things

affecting a person's reactions to you. There are 10,000 causes upstream of this moment in that person's life that are not wearing your nametag. Fundamentally, each of us is responsible to our reactions to stimuli – including the person with whom you're communicating. Just because he or she feels bad does not in itself mean that you did anything wrong. In fact, you could be helping a person by bringing something to light that, unfortunately, also makes him or her uncomfortable.

3. Keep exploring your experience. Think of it as a multi-track song, the major tracks being perceptions, body sensations, emotions, thoughts, images, and wants. Particularly sense into the tracks you're least aware of. Even if you feel out of touch with yourself at first, continuing to gently investigate your inner world and treating what you find with curiosity and kindness, will forge neural connections and increasingly bring unconscious material into awareness. I once did a stint of Jungian dream therapy with a wonderful analyst who had this saying: "When your unconscious knows you're listening to it, it'll start talking to you." (The important exception to this general advice is for people with a trauma history, who are advised to steer clear of painful material until they're really ready to go there.)

4. Consider how your upbringing, gender, culture, and life experiences have shaped your communication style. Sense their impact in your body, in body sensations, constriction of breath, posture, shoulders hunched forward protectively, etc. For example, for a long time my feelings were blocked by a kind of valve in my throat; I knew what they were but just couldn't get them through that choke point. Awareness alone often slowly dissolves these patterns. Additionally, there are formal methods for opening up self-expression, such as bioenergetics, psychodrama, counseling, and somatic experiencing.

5. Off-line, not in the moment with the other person, practice expressing the things that you usually avoid. Write and say sentences out loud (by yourself) that would be tough to express directly, such as "I feel really needy" or "I'm very angry with you." Yes, it's artificial and theatrical, but you could also act out certain strong feelings just

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to break the logjam around them – what body-oriented therapists refer to as “armoring” – such as by venting loudly in suitable situations. Until I did an “anger release” workshop in my 20’s, it was nearly impossible for me to express that emotion, but just one day of role-playing and a fair amount of yelling cracked open that capability.

It’s not just the “negative” emotions that are locked up; often the biggest undelivered communication is “I love you.” Here’s another quick story from my 20’s. I was getting Rolfed, a form off deep-tissue bodywork that back then was routinely painful, and in the hands of my particular no-mercy Rolfer sometimes actually led to rising screams coming from her office as I fidgeted in the waiting room: “Stop, Myra, please stop, oh God, please stop!” So I anticipated the fifth session in the series with dread, since it plunged into the abdomen, where I

figured buckets of tears were buried. But when she got in there, an incredible wave of love poured out, which had been suppressed for many years. In your mind or on paper, make a list of your major undelivered communications, past and present. Be sure to include positive emotions and statements which haven’t been expressed. Then decide what you want to do with this list. It will be too late or inappropriate to deliver some communications directly, though you can still experience a lot of benefit from saying them out loud or writing them in a letter that does not get sent. For the rest, it could be good to get them off your chest!

Methods like these can really help you communicate autonomously – and thus help you connect intimately.



# The Great Love

© By Tara Mohr, 2009

Something remarkable happened to me this year: I started loving everyone. Everyone. The hundreds of people I know and the billions I don't.

I'm not sure exactly when I began loving everybody, but I do know when I first realized it: I was writing a short bio for my website. I composed a sentence or two about my work and family--the usual stuff. And then what I really wanted to say popped into my mind: My heart is full of love for you.

My inner critic quickly joined this party: "That is not a normal thing to put in a bio," it warned. "That's ridiculous. In fact, it is dangerous! You cannot tell strangers on the internet that you love them!"

But something in me persisted: this was important; that this was the truth of me at this moment. The bio would be incomplete without those words. And so I typed in the last line: "Her heart is brimming full of love for you."

It struck me, how odd and powerful this was: I had no idea who would be reading those words on my website, what those individuals believed, what grievous acts they might have committed or what hatreds they harbored for others, but I was entirely sure I loved them, and I loved them wholly and deeply.

That was the beginning of--or maybe a return to--a feeling of loving everyone. That was a moment of transition of becoming a more open channel for what I'll call The Great Love.

Love, as we define it in our culture, is personal, selective, based on direct contact or experience with a person or thing. It is conditional, based on particular qualities or actions of that person or thing.

The Great Love is not selective; it is all encompassing. It is unconditional, but not without

reason: it stems from a profound knowing that everything is divine and worthy of love, that the basic nature of everything is good.

The Great Love is beyond what we can conceptualize or hold in this lifetime, but when we experience even little shards of it, whispers of it, we are filled with something so huge and powerful that we are opened, flattened, transformed.

Those little shards show up for most of us in momentary, profound experiences -- perhaps when we are in nature, when we experience a piece of art, when we look into a newborn's eyes. For many of us they show up at moments all together unexpected--staring out the car window at a red light, cutting tomatoes at the kitchen counter, peddling along on the bike at the gym. With spiritual practice, which is consciously connecting to The Great Love itself, we can become a more frequent channel, a more receptive vessel, for The Great Love.



The little shards of The Great Love, the threads, the whispers, come into my heart often now. When I watch the news or think of a country around the world, I do so with an underlying feeling of great love and kinship toward every person in it, including the "bad guys" and the dictatorial leaders.

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When I walk down the street, I feel so proud of and awed by each person I pass. I keep my mouth shut (haven't broken that social convention yet), but I so strongly want to affirm them for just being here, existing. I want tell them how unique and gorgeous and powerful they are walking down the street. I often do so in my mind.

And when I look out my twentieth floor windows at the long twisting tail of traffic on the highway, or the checker box windows of the neighboring skyscrapers, I feel a tidal wave of good will. I feel how hard each person is trying to get the love and acceptance and stability that we all want in life. I want them all to be showered with a rain of blessings and struck with lightning hope. Above all, I want them to be good to themselves, to extend to themselves the forgiveness and loving kindness they deserve. I don't know these people, but I know their hearts.



### ***The Great Love – Part II***

**I**f you become a more frequent channel for The Great Love, it will bless all those around you. But it will also aid you, in ways practical and profound:

1. Life gets easier. The Great Love makes every interaction smoother and lighter: paying the bridge toll, taking a difficult phone call at work, tackling the to do list. Those kinds of tasks can get clunky, draining. Doing them with The Great Love is the difference between driving in traffic and riding a magic carpet in the sky.

2. Fear dissolves. Love and fear are all-consuming states of mind; they cannot co-exist within us at the same moment. This is big news; this is our way out of fear. If, when I am at a party or a meeting

for work, I am in contact with The Great Love, my insecurities simply aren't with me. The material in my brain is literally unable to receive or process negative thoughts.

3. You walk through life wrapped in the blanket of The Great Love. The Great Love is the all-encompassing, unconditional love for all of Creation. It is impossible to feel The Great Love for others and not for yourself. Being a channel for The Great Love is receiving The Great Love for yourself is emanating The Great Love for others. As you walk through life wrapped in the warm, protective blanket of The Great Love, the world becomes safer, because your insane thoughts have been replaced with the sane truths of love, compassion, and calm appreciation for each human being on earth.

4. You become a magnet, in the nicest way. I know that "big" isn't the most writerly word, but I don't know any way to say it better than this: The Great Love is big, and when you become a conduit for it, you become very big. You walk into the room bigger, you exist bigger, the contours of your life grow larger. People turn around when you enter a space. People want to go your way with things. You are empowered to say more and act more boldly because you know your words and ideas aren't just coming from you, but from something very big and intelligent and true. You operate with a confidence, humor and calm that draws others toward you and causes them to want to work with you. And when they don't, you don't take it personally. I promise you that you will see these effects in your life.

5. Most importantly, you see the truth. Keats wrote, "Beauty is truth and truth, beauty." When you are in The Great Love and The Great Love is in you, it is as if a light snow has fallen on everything and that snow is the dust of miracles, the tinge of stunning beauty. It is as if the most well-crafted, moving, beautiful play ever written is being played out in your daily life. The Great Love is the opera glasses that allow us to witness it.

How do you put those opera glasses on?

There are more ways than there are human beings on earth. We are in no shortage of ways for each of us to open to more love.

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The most important one is this: Ask. Ask God, spirit, the universe, the power of creation to make you a channel of The Great Love. Ask your inner wisdom what you need to do to become a greater channel for it. In any situation, take your focus off the whirling world around you and turn inward for a few moments. Ask The Great Love to enter the situation, through you, through others and in the space itself. And here are some other ways to access The Great Love:

### **Bring More Love Into The Ecosystem of You:**

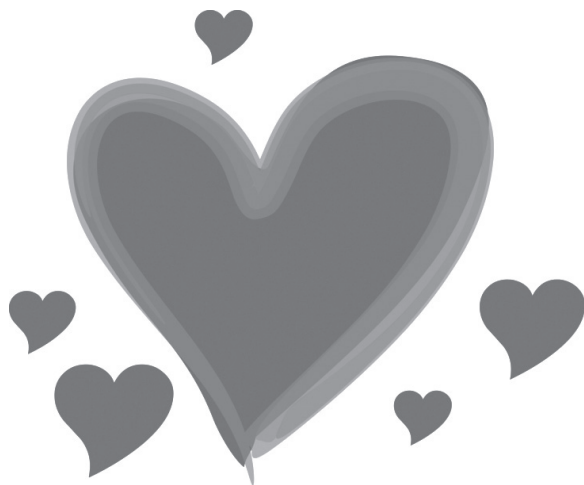
Find out how you are withholding love from yourself, and work toward stopping that unjust act. Probe your destructive, self-harming beliefs. Bring love into your heart and your body by living your passions.

Be of service. In any situation, ask yourself, the universe, or the people around you how you can best be of service. Do as many acts of kindness as you can. Give generously of your time, money, and possessions. All of this will bring more love into you.

### **Love the People in Your Midst:**

Decide that everyone around you is perfect as they are and holds 100 miraculous gifts. Start keeping a list of them. Appreciate them out loud.

Every day, give ten authentic compliments to strangers or to people you know. Study forgiveness and work toward forgiving the people toward whom you are harboring anger, resentment, hurt and hate.



### **Invite the Great Love In:**

End the separation between you and the rest of humanity. Realize that, since birth, you've been trained by our culture to believe in separation. You've been schooled that some people are better than or worse than others, that some people are fundamentally good and others evil. I know that you can't just let go of these thoughts. They have to let go of you. You need to replace them with new ideas.

Grapple the idea everything is either an expression of love or a call for love. Hold this thought and look for evidence to support it.

Believe that everyone is trying as hard as you. Hold this thought and look for evidence to support it.

Believe that everyone wants the things you want: belonging, acceptance, to be heard, to feel competent, accepted, to matter. Hold this thought and look for evidence to support it.

There are millions more ways to access The Great Love, and the ones that are personal to you will be the ones that are most powerful for you. If you ask The Great Love what you need to do to bring more love into you today, it will answer you. If you invite The Great Love in, it will visit. If you give your problems to it, it will not let you down. Go play with all of this and discover, and let me know what you learn.

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### **Author Bio**

**Tara Mohr** is a writer, life coach and program officer at a bay area community foundation. To read more of Tara's writing on the spiritual life and on living life with greater attention, visit her blog, Bountiful Heart at <http://sophiashouse.wordpress.com>.

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# Words of Wisdom

## Heart to Heart

*Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.*  
~ Plato

*I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation. Not mediation, negotiation, problem-solving, debate, or public meetings. Simple, truthful conversation where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each listen well.*  
~ Margaret J. Wheatley

*Everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.*  
~ Albert Einstein

*What we need is what the ancient Israelites called hochma - the science of the heart - the capacity to see, to feel, and then to act as if the future depended on you. Believe me, it does.*  
~ Bill Moyers

*[A proper teacher is] the one person who . . . 'is always on our side' -- the one who is motivated not by self-aggrandizement or a wish to be venerated but by the wish for the liberation and freedom of the student. . . . The teacher does not exist to be admired by us but to point us back to our innate nature.*  
~ Sharon Salzberg

*Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.*  
~ Winston Churchill

*The happiest hours of my life have been spent in the flow of affection among friends.*  
~ Thomas Jefferson

*The more deeply you understand other people, the more you will appreciate them, the more reverent you will feel about them. To touch the soul of another human being is to walk on holy ground.*  
~ Stephen R. Covey

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### San Rafael Meditation Group

Open to beginners and experienced practitioners, we meet on Wednesday evenings at the A Sante day spa in downtown San Rafael at the corner of Brooks and 3rd. "Early-bird" meditation starts at 6:45 with formal instruction at 7:00; meditation ends at 7:30, followed by a brief break, and then a dharma talk and discussion, ending at 8:30. It is led by Rick Hanson, and for more information, check out [www.WiseBrain.org/sanrafaelmeditation.html](http://www.WiseBrain.org/sanrafaelmeditation.html). Newcomers are always welcome!

# *From Our Readers...*

© Poem by Tom Bowlin, 2008

## ***Noticed***

My mother  
Never noticed

How much  
I love her



Photo credit: Wayne Miller, U.S.A.





## Grateful Wonder

There's just something about bubbles that makes people happy. Here are some really good ones – some of them light-years across! It's remarkable to contemplate coherent structures that are that large . . .

- Bubble basics: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soap\\_bubble](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soap_bubble)
- The Bubble Nebula (10 light-years across): <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap090124.html>
- A bubble in Cygnus: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap081113.html>
- From the supernova of 1006 (60 light-years across): <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap080704.html>
- Left over from a supernova (150 light-years across): <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap090131.html>
- The Homunculus Nebula: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap080617.html>
- The Fetus Nebula: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap080825.html>
- The Crescent Nebula (25 light-years across): <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap080813.html>
- And my favorite, just called The Bubble: <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap061018.html>

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# Offerings

Rick Hanson, PhD, and Rick Mendius, MD

1. Sounds True offers *Meditations for Happiness* by Rick Hanson, Ph.D. It's 3 CD's worth of talks and brain-savvy exercises for increasing your happiness, with an emphasis on experiential practices and practical tools. It is offered as an inexpensive download to your computer, where you can listen to it or burn it to CD's or transfer it to an iPod.

This program truly turned out to be pretty great, and here's a comment about it from the author, Annie Spiegelman:

*On his new "Meditations for Happiness" program, benevolent Rick Hanson guides me to sit down and face my inner critic – and then actually see it as a form and shrink it. Being a Master Gardener, I see the critic as a gnome who tiptoes into my brain when no one is looking, with those tiny pointy shoes, and makes me doubt myself. I shrink him down to the size of a snail and toss him out. He knows nothing. The shoes are a dead giveaway.*

Here's the link to this program at Sounds True: <http://shop.soundstrue.com/shop.soundstrue.com/SelectProd.do;jsessionid=AA644B8B2BA5A2526E297913DE0434AD?prodId=1715&manufacturer=Sounds%20True&category=Exploring%20the%20Psyche&name=Meditations%20for%20Happiness>

2. Rick also has a chapter, "7 Facts about the Brain That Incline the Mind to Joy," in *Measuring the Immeasurable* – which is chock full of essays from luminaries like James Austin, MD, Larry Dossey, MD, Daniel Goleman, PhD., Candace Pert, PhD, Marilyn Schlitz, PhD, Dan Siegel, MD, Charles Tart, PhD, and Cassandra Vieten, PhD. Check it out at <http://www.amazon.com/Measuring-Immeasurable-Scientific-Case-Spirituality/dp/1591796547>.

3. At Spirit Rock, in 2009, these daylongs with Rick Hanson and Rick Mendius are scheduled:

- **The Neurology of Awakening**, on Sunday, March 1. We'll cover how to nurture the brain states that foster the steadiness of mind leading to the deepest and most liberating insights. This is our foundational workshop, with solid neurology and practical tools for activating, step-by-step, the brain states of the Buddha's progressive process of contemplative illumination.
- **Equanimity**, on Sunday, May 17. Equanimity is the key to freedom from emotional reactions, and to cutting the chain of craving and clinging that leads to suffering. This workshop will also address the neuropsychology of difficult emotions, as well as trauma, and neurologically-informed methods for dealing with those.
- **The Neurodharma of Love**, on Saturday, May 23. The emphasis will be on relationships in general and love in the broadest sense, integrating deep teachings on compassion and lovingkindness with a clear-eyed understanding of how we evolved to be caring toward "us" and often wary and aggressive toward "them."
- **Resting in Emptiness: The Evolution of Awareness and the Transcendence of the Self**, on Saturday, November 7. This workshop will address the thorny and fundamental question of . . . "me, myself, and I." The self – with its tendencies to grasp after possessions and take things personally – is perhaps the premier engine of suffering. We'll explore the evolution of the apparent self in the animal kingdom, and the ways in which the self is real and is also not real at all, coming to rest more and more in the underlying spacious awareness in which self appears and disappears.

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## *offerings continued...*

- **The Hard Things That Open the Mind and Heart: Practicing with Difficult Conditions**, led with James Baraz, on Sunday, December 13. This is for people grappling with difficult conditions – both internal and external – and for caregivers and friends who support those individuals. These include challenges with the body, mind, and life circumstances. We'll cover Buddhist perspectives and practices for difficult conditions; lovingkindness for oneself and for any being who suffers; brain-savvy ways to strengthen your capacity to be with the hard stuff; and methods from the intersection of the dharma and neuroscience for lifting mood and cultivating joy.

*Also in 2009, there are these additional offerings:*

4. At the Aging Artfully: Mind, Body, and Spirit weekend retreat in Sausalito, California, on March 27-29, Rick will be teaching a workshop on "The Wise Brain: Tools for Happiness, Love, and Wisdom." See [www.renewalretreats.org/programs/2009\\_0327/index.htm](http://www.renewalretreats.org/programs/2009_0327/index.htm) for more information.
5. At the Awakening to Mindfulness conference in San Diego, April 2 – 4, the presenters include Marsha Linehan, Tara Brach, Steven Hayes, Jack Kornfield, and Rick Hanson. 18 continuing education credits are available, and it should be an incredible program. Rick will be presenting two workshops on Friday, April 3: "The Self-Transforming Brain" and "Taking in the Good." See [www.facesconferences.com](http://www.facesconferences.com) for more information.
6. At the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, in Barre, MA, on Saturday, April 11, Drs. Hanson and Mendius will be offering "Neuro-Dharma: Mindfulness and the Shaping of the Brain." See [https://bcbs.dharma.org/Pages/course\\_detail.lasso?-Key=Value=58&-Token.Action=&image=1](https://bcbs.dharma.org/Pages/course_detail.lasso?-Key=Value=58&-Token.Action=&image=1) for more information.
7. At Kripalu Center, in Massachusetts, April 12 – 17, Drs. Hanson and Mendius are teaching a weeklong workshop on "The Intimate Brain: Exploring the Neural Circuits of Happiness, Love, and Non-Dual Awareness." See [www.kripalu.org/program/view/IB91/the\\_intimate\\_brain\\_exploring\\_the\\_neural\\_circuits](http://www.kripalu.org/program/view/IB91/the_intimate_brain_exploring_the_neural_circuits) for more information.
8. At New York Insight Meditation Center, on Sunday April 19, Rick Hanson will be presenting "The Neurodharma of Love." See <http://nyimc.org/index.php/site/eventcalendar> for more information.
9. At James Baraz's wonderful *Awakening Joy* course, April 21 and 22, Rick will be a guest speaker. His subject will be how the brain constructs suffering in order to help you survive – and how understanding the mechanisms of that process suggests ways to suffer less.
10. With the Dharma Zephyr Insight Meditation Community in Nevada, Rick will be leading a two day workshop September 12 and 13 on using brain-savvy methods to steady the mind, quiet it, bring it to singleness, and concentrate it, following the road map of the Buddha. See [www.nevadadharm.net/zephyr.html](http://www.nevadadharm.net/zephyr.html) for more information.
11. Through R. Cassidy Seminars, Rick will be teaching continuing education workshops to mental health professionals in Los Angeles and San Diego (September 25 & 26), in Portland and Seattle (November 13 & 14). The workshops will focus on translating neuroscience research, informed by contemplative practice, into tools and skills that therapists can offer their clients. See [www.ceuregistration.com](http://www.ceuregistration.com) for more information.

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12. At the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, DC, Tara Brach and Rick Hanson will be offering “The Neurodharma of Love” workshop on Saturday, October 10. See [www.imcw.org/index.php](http://www.imcw.org/index.php) for more information.

13. At the University of East London, the conference on Mindfulness and Well-Being: From Spirituality to Cognitive Neuroscience will be held on November 20 and 21. Rick will be giving several talks and a workshop. Contact Dr. Patrizia Collard at [drcollard@stressminus.co.uk](mailto:drcollard@stressminus.co.uk) for more information.

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***The Wellspring Institute for  
Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom***

The Institute is a 501c3 non-profit corporation, and it publishes the Wise Brain Bulletin. The Wellspring Institute gathers, organizes, and freely offers information and methods – supported by brain science and the contemplative disciplines – for greater happiness, love, effectiveness, and wisdom. For more information about the Institute, please go to [www.WiseBrain.org](http://www.WiseBrain.org).

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***Perspectives on Self-Care***

Be careful with all self-help methods (including those presented in this Bulletin), which are no substitute for working with a licensed healthcare practitioner. People vary, and what works for someone else may not be a good fit for you. When you try something, start slowly and carefully, and stop immediately if it feels bad or makes things worse.



***Fare Well***

***~ May you and all beings be happy, loving, and wise ~***