

## Help Yourself First

Baba Muktananda once said: "Today a person told me he wanted to help others. I took one look at him and could tell that he needed lots of help himself."

Baba used to say, "If you can help others, fine; but if you cannot, at least do not be a nuisance." It is a very simple teaching.

## Develop Willpower

Many of us don't use willpower nearly as often as we might give ourselves credit for, and in fact might not realize that we have a weakly developed power of will. We attribute to ourselves the power of will, but in large part it remains more potential than dynamic. The strength of our willpower depends on how vigorously we develop and use it—just like any other muscle. The more we actually use it in day-to-day life, the stronger it becomes.

Willpower must be consciously used and developed through practice. It is something to be consistently exercised. And as much as consistency, it requires persistence. Willpower is not something that suddenly pops up out of nowhere and works all on its own. It's a gift from God, but we must recognize, appreciate, and apply it in order for it to work in any practical way in our actual life.

**In order for will to be expressed in our physical, emotional, or mental lives, we must consciously direct it toward a predetermined goal, a conscious intent.**

For example, we can have the conscious intent to spend some time each day remaining still and silent, inwardly and outwardly. There is such great power in stillness and silence. Making an effort to spend some time in stillness and silence gives us a specific way of practicing the application of will.

We will notice that through spending some time each day intentionally remaining still and silent, we start experiencing a greater sense of inner power and our innate capability. Stillness and silence bestow power, whereas restless activity and mental noise, including idle daydreaming, tend to dissipate power.

Once we see that through the use of will we can accomplish small goals, it will open the faith, courage, and enthusiasm to aim for larger goals. In the end, there is no

limit to what can be accomplished through the coordination of attention, conscious intent, and will.

## Recreate Yourself

We recreate ourselves and our lives all over again in each new moment. Each moment is a clean slate offered as an opportunity to create a new possibility. If we don't do it consciously, we will do it subconsciously—which will inevitably be according to past conditioning.

We can create new habits to replace the old ones that subconsciously control us. It is what we habitually and predominantly think and feel that determines the details of personal life, and not the fleeting thoughts that vaguely arise from time to time.

Let's make genuine efforts to focus our attention on the higher qualities of love, compassion, equanimity, and cheerfulness. When something unpleasant arises, we can withdraw our attention from it and apply our will to replace it with one of the higher qualities. Of course, we will need a conscious intent to do this.

Replace anxiety, agitation, and stress with feelings of harmony, well-being, equanimity, and contentment. To do this, or anything else, simply remember the principles of attention, conscious intent, and will. Through using those three tools, anything is possible.

Anything that we find to be unpleasant or uncomfortable can be replaced by a more pleasant and enjoyable experience. We simply need the conscious intent to inject enough willpower to replace what is inharmonious with something more conducive to harmony.

## Don't Leave Anything to Chance

During the years I led weekend workshops, I did a lot of air travel. After a time I began to notice that I was anxious and nervous about flying, meeting connections on time, being picked up on time, my luggage arriving there along with me, and numerous other stresses that seemed to go along with the whole ordeal.

At some point I began to apply the principle of replacement, and, from the point of driving to the airport on, I knew that everything would go smoothly. I *saw* and *felt* myself arriving at my destination in good spirits, my luggage at my side, my ride

waiting good-naturedly, and I did not even *consider* any other possibility. I sustained the feeling of *already being there*. This new way of approaching travel totally transformed the experience for me.

These days I see and feel the end result of any endeavor before I even begin. If I'm taking a long drive, I visualize the reality of arriving at my destination with the feeling that everything went as smoothly as possible. I see myself already there, having arrived at the perfect time. The creative principle works with the feeling of having *seen* the outcome, of something already having happened, already being true—not the 'hope' that things will work out. **I no longer like to leave the results of anything up to chance.** I see how it will end before I begin. This is such an amazing principle, when practiced. The power is in the feeling of something being *already true*.