The Eckhart Tolle School of Awakening

A Six-Month Advanced Training to Intensify Presence and Live Your Highest Purpose

COURSE WORKBOOK
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Introduction: Welcome to The Eckhart Tolle School of Awakening

Over the next six months you will experience a profound training designed to further the awakening of consciousness already happening in you—and allow you to integrate this shift more continuously in daily life.

We have created this curriculum for those truly committed to their spiritual evolution and to the collective good of humankind. You’ll get the most out of the experience if you engage fully with each facet of the course.

From the four-day retreats that begin and conclude the program, to each of our monthly video sessions and everything in between, you will be supported by Eckhart, Kim, and a worldwide community of people dedicated to living a life of Presence.

Before getting started, we’d like to emphasize the importance of our private Facebook Community gatherings and our Group Meditation Sessions.

With our Facebook Community gatherings, you’ll have the opportunity to get to know your fellow course participants and share your experiences. In a sense, each one of us is a teacher and a student in The School of Awakening; we can all support each other and learn from one another along the journey. We encourage you to "lean in" to our community, share your questions and challenges, and offer your wisdom if you’re called to do so.

Our Group Meditation Sessions invite you to immerse yourself in a collective field of stillness co-created by you and our entire community. Meeting at this deep level and maintaining our connection to “the vertical dimension” is an essential aspect of The School of Awakening experience. Please be sure to block time on your calendar twice a month for these live sessions.

On behalf of The School of Awakening team, we look forward to being with you on the journey and we wish you all the best in the course.

If at any point you have a question, contact us at soa@eckharttolle.com.
The School of Awakening begins with a four-day event led by Eckhart Tolle and Kim Eng. We will explore the foundations of spiritual awakening and the stabilization of Presence in daily life. The opening retreat will combine lecture and practice, including meditation and other tools designed to strengthen your roots in Presence. This is also where you’ll meet your fellow School of Awakening classmates inside the private Facebook Community.

TOPICS INCLUDE

> How to integrate the shift in consciousness that is already happening inside you into your relationships, your career, your creative pursuits—and share it with the world

> Discovering the continual stillness and peace within you

> A new outlook on the inevitable challenges we face along the journey of our lives

> “The art of living”—finding balance between the world of form and the formless
Practices

1. USE WHAT YOU HAVE  Eckhart has often said that we don’t need to run away from challenges or to believe that we need a more conducive environment for sustaining and integrating spiritual awakening. “Whatever it is that makes up your daily life can become part of your spiritual practice,” he explains. A major theme in The School of Awakening is to “use what you have” for your spiritual growth. So the question is, what do you have and are you willing to work with it? Is there a specific challenge in your life right now? Are things more or less okay? A little of both? The best opportunity for spiritual growth is always right where you find yourself. Discomfort or resistance is a signal that we’re not aligned with the moment.

As Eckhart teaches, without exposure to the winds and storms of everyday life, we will wither. Therefore, our practice in daily life is to embrace the moment as fully as we can in a state of nonjudgmental acceptance. This is how we begin to balance the “Surface I” and the “Deep I.” Mastering this dance is the purpose of our lives.

2. INNER-BODY MEDITATION  The energy of the body is “not yet form as such,” teaches Eckhart. For this reason, it offers a bridge between the physical form of the body and its formless source. The inner-body meditation is a way of exploring “the unmanifest” and anchoring our attention in the Now. Tuning in to the energy of the body in this way is very helpful in challenging situations. It can also bring stillness to an overactive mind.

Kim Eng leads a guided inner-body meditation as part of The School of Awakening curriculum, recorded specifically for students in the program to use as a support tool during the six-month training and beyond. Refer back to this video as often as you would like. With regular practice, we’re better able to maintain an ongoing sense of the inner body even as we engage in the activities of our daily lives—or what Eckhart often refers to as “the dance of form and formlessness.”

3. GIVE ATTENTION TO THE NATURAL WORLD  When we give our attention fully to any of the multitude of forms expressed in nature, it helps us to transcend the conceptual mind and return to Presence. Whether you’re walking through a quiet forest, playing with your dog or cat, or simply looking deeply at a flower, give yourself opportunities to connect with the natural world that is continuously unfolding all around us. See if you can use nature as a practice both in serene environments and in more hectic surroundings, which will require a higher degree of alertness and inner stillness. Pay attention to the tendency to name things. If mental labels for the objects you see and hear pop up in your mind, see them for the pointers that they are, and remember that the essence of nature can never be contained by human categorization.
4. **SIT QUIETLY DOING NOTHING** When everything you do is reduced to a means to an end, you have fallen into what Eckhart calls “a huge trap of unconsciousness.” Not necessarily the same thing as a formal meditation session, to “sit quietly doing nothing” can have profound benefits because it helps us train in holding inner stillness and a quiet mind even as we engage in the next thing we’ll actually be doing.

Set aside time throughout your day to practice being absolutely present in “doing nothing.” We suggest a period of 15–30 minutes. Ultimately, this quality of stillness or Presence can flow into the activities you perform—if you bring your full attention to the activity, honoring the present moment as primary.

5. **LEAVE THE “EMPTY SPACES” ALONE** In addition to the practice of sitting quietly, Eckhart advises us to be vigilant about the many naturally occurring “cessations in activity” that we experience throughout the day. This might be while sitting at a red light, in line at the grocery, rebooting your computer, and so on. Notice the mind’s tendency to attempt to fill these seemingly “empty spaces” with thinking or planning. Often overlooked, you’ll be surprised at how many opportunities the day presents to you to “simply be.” On a related note, watch the mind’s tendency to pull you out of the state of simply being—for example, when that email appears in your inbox or a new text message arrives. Can you keep some awareness in the vertical dimension even as you reach for the phone?

**Reflections**

Are you seeking guidance into any specific questions here at the outset of the program? What might those be? (We recommend keeping these handy for our live Q&A sessions with Eckhart and Kim. We also encourage discussion with your peers in the course.)

What are your short and long-term intentions for engaging in this curriculum?

What are the challenges you would like to learn how to face more consciously?
The journey of spiritual awakening unfolds uniquely for each one of us. We can’t understand spiritual awakening through conceptual thinking because the essence of awakening is beyond any form of mental concept. What we need to understand are the obstacles that obscure our realization of Being (along with the obstacles that arise as we navigate the journey). We don’t need to find, discover, or create awakening; we need to recognize the obstacles that keep us from realizing it is right here.

With practice, teaches Eckhart, “one comes to a place where obstacles are recognized not as our enemies, but as something that is both inevitable and a welcome opportunity for surrender and spiritual growth.” This month, he helps us understand how to approach the dramatic shift in identity that unfolds as we break free from the trance of ego—the “Surface I” or “little me.”

TOPICS INCLUDE

- The essence of spiritual awakening—and the things that get in the way
- How to avoid the trap of making spiritual awakening a future goal
- Being comfortable with “not knowing” in the face of confusion about our journey and life
- Integrating presence practices with technology and cell phones to support your journey of spiritual awakening
- How to manage feelings of disconnection, irritation, loneliness, and other difficult emotional states that arise on the path
Practices

6. STOP STRIVING  One of the most common obstacles to awakening is to look forward to a more perfect version of yourself in the future. As Eckhart cautions, “If you’re waiting for the big thing to happen to you—the big fireworks called enlightenment—then you can be sure that it’s not going to happen.” Because all experiences come and go, Eckhart suggests not to look for so-called spiritual experiences or to strive for some future realization. Instead, our practice is to let go of the “striving” mindset, and go more deeply into the present moment—the portal to awakening.

Be vigilant about the mind’s tendency to yearn for a better time ahead. Inquire into the things you may be “longing for” and whether or not this is becoming a source of suffering for you. If the moment before you is unpleasant or unsatisfactory in some way, make it your first step to simply accept things the way they are. From there, you can more easily move into a friendly relationship with your experience. This is the shift that changes everything.

7. GET COMFORTABLE “NOT KNOWING”  In conventional understanding, we often use the terms faith or trust to point to an inner sense of a power that transcends the personal. This is the power of consciousness, teaches Eckhart, which we can sense within ourselves. From this power comes great wisdom—if we can learn to let go of thinking and step into the deeper awareness that emerges out of inner stillness.

When you find yourself in need of some knowledge or insight—maybe the solution to a creative problem or the right words to say to mend a wounded relationship—see if you can rest in the space of “not knowing” rather than trying to work it all out with your thinking mind. By bringing ourselves into alignment with the present moment, we make the connection to the higher intelligence that arises from the formless dimension. If you’re struggling with a dilemma, observe your thoughts and emotions around the situation, which might be creating more obstacles for you. Remember that who you are is not found in your thoughts—nor is the deeper wisdom required to unravel the situation consciously.

8. EXPERIMENT WHEN UNHAPPINESS AND NEGATIVITY ARISE  When feelings of unhappiness, discontent, or other forms of negativity arise within you, Eckhart invites us to “experiment” with these feelings as a regular practice. What’s the way out when unhappiness arises? Step one is always to accept what is. Eckhart suggests we ask ourselves, “What happens to unhappiness when I don’t mind being unhappy anymore?” In addition, bring awareness to your thinking, which is closely tied to your emotional state. Eckhart estimates that 90 percent of our unhappiness stems from unobserved thoughts. He reminds us that we are never the emotions or thoughts we experience; we are the space in which they are experienced. Freedom comes through this recognition.
9. OUTSMART YOUR SMARTPHONE  Our portable devices are a part of our lives—but they shouldn’t be in control of them. Eckhart advises that we only engage with our smartphones when there’s a real purpose for doing so. Make it your practice to bring spacious awareness to those times you use your phone or other electronic devices. Watch your responses to the assortment of bleeps and blips that signal a request for your time or attention. Take a conscious breath and find your inner connection to stillness. Then, if you choose to do so, engage with whomever is reaching out. This creates a qualitative difference in the energy field you bring to the encounter.

10. INNER BODY MEDITATION (SEE MONTH 1)  Once again, we recommend returning to your inner-body meditation practice with regularity to quiet the mind and cultivate a more continual sense of inner stillness. This is a powerful way to avoid the many obstacles to Presence that you might otherwise bump up against.

Reflections

How would you describe your experience in the first month of The School of Awakening?

Have you experienced the energy of "striving" that Eckhart describes? How did you work with that energy?

What other challenges—and what insights—have arisen for you as you’ve engaged the course content to this point?

What are the practices that you have found helpful thus far in staying alert and acting from a place of Presence? What new practices have you explored?

Are additional questions coming up for you? Keep these handy for our live Q&A sessions with Eckhart and Kim … but allow them to "dissolve" if that’s what happens naturally.
Many of us often wonder how far we’ve come on the spiritual journey and in the awakening process. It’s not easy for us to judge our own progress. However, our relationships offer one of the best indicators. “Relationship” here includes all the individuals we interact with, from our spouse or intimate partner to our family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors—even the strangers we encounter in our day-to-day lives.

Are you able to bring Presence to all of these relationships? Your relationships will reflect back to you where you are on your spiritual path. This section of the curriculum explains how to allow your relationships to become your “spiritual training ground” along the journey of awakening.

**TOPICS INCLUDE**

- How to bring inner spaciousness into all of your relationships, no matter how challenging
- The importance of alone time, being still, and exploring your essence identity
- How to sense the transcendent dimension that is deeper than any emotion
- Avoiding the trap of being drawn into other people’s active pain-bodies
- Bringing Presence into the parent relationship and supporting your children’s own awakening process
- The art of the “conscious conversation”
- How to stabilize and integrate Presence when interacting and speaking with other people
- Meeting another person at the most essential level
Practices

11. DEEP LISTENING This is a practice that is only possible when you are fully present—especially with respect to relationships and how we interact with others. When someone approaches you with something, can you "give up the internal dialogue" when it’s not needed? For this practice, the first step is to do your best to refrain from thinking. Even as you place some of your focus on the content of what the other person is saying, remember to maintain a sense of the shared Beingness between you—the "Deep I" that is in essence in dialogue with itself.

If a disagreement arises within you, do you find yourself identifying with your mental position? Do you feel the need to defend that position? If these judgmental attitudes arise, pause, breathe, and, if necessary, excuse yourself from the situation in order to come back to Presence. As an added step, you can reiterate what the other party stated, to see whether or not you have really received what they were trying to say.

Deep listening can of course be practiced in a more formal way with a partner or friend. It is a skill we can always improve.

12. SPEAKING FROM PRESENCE Perhaps as equally challenging as deep listening is the practice of speaking from Presence. And like deep listening, this is a skill that grows gradually. There’s a strong tendency to be drawn completely into thought when we’re about to speak to someone. Before you speak, see if you can place some of your attention on spaciousness, and feel the sense of Presence in the background even as the words leave your lips. (Note: the same thing applies if you’re face to face, on the phone, videoconferencing, and so on.) If you notice yourself getting lost in thought, take a conscious breath, sense the inner body, and resume the conversation.

Once again, we recommend finding a practice partner to assist you in learning to speak from a place of Presence if that is helpful to you.

13. ALERT OBSERVATION Since it’s easy to be drawn back into old relationship patterns and reactivity, especially when under stress, the practice of alert observation can help you avoid falling into the same old traps (you know the ones...). The practice here is to pay attention to your inner state, including your emotions, your thoughts, and your sense of the body. Relax, breathe, and at the same time, pay attention to the person in front of you even as you sense the "Deep I" you share. Alert observation keeps you grounded in the moment and able to respond from a place of higher consciousness.
14. **BRING IN THE TRANSCENDENT** Perhaps more an attitude than a practice, “bringing in the transcendent” is ultimately our essential task, whether in relationship or in solitude. However, it is of critical importance if we want our relationships to flourish. “The transcendent dimension is really what transforms relationships,” explains Eckhart. “It is your primary responsibility to bring in the transcendent in relationship, and to remain connected with the transcendent within yourself.” While many factors may bring you into relationship with another person, the vital question in relationship is always whether or not the transcendent dimension—or the realization of stillness—is present.

15. **GIVE YOURSELF “ALONE” TIME** There’s one important relationship we haven’t mentioned yet: your relationship with yourself. “Especially as you awaken,” explains Eckhart, “you may feel the need to have some alone time with yourself.” It is wise to give yourself time alone—but not necessarily to fill that time with things to do. Spend time alone by simply exploring your Being nature—the conscious Presence that you are. Enjoy the simplicity of the moment and your surroundings without judgment. This is both restorative to mind and body and anchors you in the here and now.

16. **PAIN-BODY MEDITATION** We’re all familiar with the pain-body—the energetic accumulation of our individual and collective emotional wounds that exists like a little entity within our consciousness. “We all get our buttons pushed,” explains Kim Eng. “Whether it’s your significant other, your children, a co-worker, your friends—something happens that activates the pain-body and it feels like it just wants to explode.” For those occasions, Kim has recorded for students in *The School of Awakening* a new pain-body meditation to help us prepare for this challenge, particularly in the context of our closest relationships.

As the saying goes, sometimes the only way out is through. This applies to the experience of the pain-body. We suggest you make the pain-body meditation a regular part of your practice to support you in remaining conscious, open, and rooted in Presence—especially around the people most skilled at pushing your buttons. If, for example, you have a meeting on your calendar with a person that can be difficult for you to work with, set aside time before or after the conversation to practice your pain-body meditation. If pain-body arises during the interaction, see how long you can hold space for the pain-body as it attempts to spur you into unconscious action. Keep breathing and noticing the thoughts and feelings that will come up without becoming identified with them (one of the ego’s many traps).
Reflections

What are the relationships you’d like to see improve in your life? What can you yourself do to help?

Are there relationships that are no longer serving you on your path? What feelings and thoughts arise for you when you consider these people or situations?

What relationships give you the greatest challenge in terms of your capacity to stay conscious and compassionate?

With respect to the pain-body, how would you describe your experience of this energy prior to beginning your work in *The School of Awakening*? Have you seen a shift in this pattern? How has this expressed itself in your relationships?

What situations were you able to navigate with Presence where you may have ordinarily slipped into unconsciousness?

You’re halfway through the program! What new insights have you discovered? What’s continuing to challenge you? Reflect on your original intentions for the program. What’s changed for you in this regard?
"If you had not suffered as you have," explains Eckhart, "there would be no depth to you as a human being—no humility, no compassion. Without difficulty in life, there can be no evolution in consciousness." In this section of the program, Eckhart discusses how we have reached a new point in our history. For a growing number of people today, suffering is no longer the primary impetus behind our spiritual evolution. For those who are ready, the possibility exists to live a more conscious life where a huge amount of unnecessary suffering drops away. The rest of us, however, may require more time and more practice before this profound shift manifests fully in our lives.

This month, we invite you to explore the experience of suffering as one of our most important teachers on the journey of awakening. We will emphasize letting go of the suffering that we create for ourselves when we forget who we are at the most essential level.

**TOPICS INCLUDE**

- How to transcend dysfunctional mental conditioning
- Breaking the cycle of relationship conflict and interpersonal drama
- The fundamental experience of stepping out of thought
- Freeing yourself from egoic thoughts, including complaining, victim patterns, and moral superiority
- True intelligence and the further development of your “Presence power”
- The next step for humanity: conscious evolution
Practices

17. NON-RESISTANCE IN THE FACE OF PHYSICAL PAIN When we surrender to the moment and, with as little resistance as possible, allow our physical sensations to simply be, we can begin to free ourselves from the mental suffering that can arise in the face of extreme pain or chronic discomfort. Whatever particular form our pain may take, “When you allow it to be there, it shifts,” explains Eckhart.

When faced with pain, Eckhart recommends that we take time to be fully conscious and present with it. You may have little other choice. Can you experience the sensations in the body without identifying with any story about it? As Eckhart puts it, can you “drop the label and just feel”? For anyone dealing with severe or chronic pain, we recognize how hard this can be. The good news is that the more we’re able to fully accept the present moment, the more the suffering associated with the pain will subside.

It’s important to note that this doesn’t mean you shouldn’t consult your doctor or receive medical treatment if it’s necessary. The lesson here is that we make things much more difficult when we burden ourselves with a mental narrative about the sensations we are experiencing. This is why practicing acceptance and non-resistance when we’re not faced with pain can be so helpful in supporting us through times when we are.

18. SEPARATE THE SITUATION AND YOUR REACTION TO IT Among the radical shifts in perception that occur on the journey of awakening is the realization that you have the freedom and power to keep your mental-emotional reactions separate from the events or situations you experience. Mental-emotional suffering often arises out of conditioned inner reactivity that says, in effect, “This should not be happening.” Millions of people today are trapped in this mindset, and as Eckhart cautions, “if you don’t understand the mechanism behind it, you will continuously be deceived by it.”

Make it your practice to observe the tendency in yourself to judge your external circumstances or the people you encounter. Do you have a habit of complaining to yourself? Do you think to yourself, “this is unfair” or “they’re being so unconscious”? When things aren’t going according to plans, do you find yourself in resistance to the present moment? Bring your awareness to the thoughts and subsequent emotions that are arising when you’re not comfortable with the moment. Saying “yes” to what is helps our reactions to subside and allows us to rediscover our connection to spaciousness and stillness.

One of the more ideal times for this practice is whenever you find yourself doing what’s usually called “waiting.” If inner resistance arises, can you shift to a place of neutral acceptance of the situation? If we’re vigilant about our state of consciousness in “boring” situations, we can transform a previously unpleasant experience into an opportunity to deepen our awareness of the vertical dimension and the “Deep I”.

19. CONSCIOUS SUFFERING There are certain situations where it is perfectly natural and understandable for us to suffer. Losing a loved one is the perfect example. However, even if we’re in the midst of a major loss or life event, it is possible to practice “conscious suffering.” This helps us from falling victim to any number of ways we can make a situation worse for ourselves through what Eckhart calls “an unhappy story about it.”

“Conscious suffering,” explains Eckhart, “means you allow yourself to suffer, which means there’s a space of awareness around it. It is there in your energy field, but it does not become you.” This isn’t about saying “I must surrender to my dreadful life.” The practice is to be with the sensations we’re feeling without creating a conceptual identity. In feeling fully without judgment whatever pain we are experiencing, we move one step closer to transcendence. Even in the face of great difficulty, we have access to a core of unshakeable stillness at any time.

20. ACCEPT THE SITUATION Sometimes seemingly minor things can generate considerable suffering if we see ourselves as trapped in a place or situation that is highly unpleasant yet we have little power to change. If you have a job in a stressful or toxic workplace, for example, or you’re going to register your vehicle at the DMV, you may not be able to change the environment—but you can change how you respond to it. Being aware of what is happening within you under such circumstances is one place to start. An inner narrative that stands in opposition to what is will always create suffering

“Sometimes we can only alleviate what is inside of us,” explains Eckhart. If we can’t do anything about it, our first practice is to accept the situation as fully as possible. Bring spacious awareness to your circumstances. Keep some of your attention on the inner body and your breathing. See if you can let judgmental thoughts go and turn an otherwise dreadful meeting into an opportunity for bringing the “Deep I” to the office (or the DMV).

21. GET COMFORTABLE “NOT KNOWING” Uncertainty or anxiety about a future outcome or direction can become a tremendous source of suffering—whether you’re anticipating good news or expecting the worst. As discussed in Month 2 above, the practice of “getting comfortable ‘not knowing’” can be our best ally when we’re struggling with giddy excitement or serious apprehension.

22. DEALING WITH THE PAIN-BODY The suffering we experience both in the face and the wake of pain-body attacks can be particularly challenging and upsetting on many levels. We recommend returning to your pain-body meditation practice with regularity as an antidote to the arising of this challenge that so often catches us unawares. Relationships aren’t the only place we encounter the pain-body—it can arise unexpectedly while you’re going about your daily business, when someone cuts you off in traffic, or when a sudden unpleasant memory leaps to mind. Therefore practicing our pain-body meditation helps us build our “Presence muscles” so to speak, so that when the pain-body arises, it is less likely to overwhelm us and push us into complete unconsciousness.
Reflections

Are you or is someone you know currently facing a serious illness or health challenge? What is your relationship to these circumstances? What helps you remain Present in the face of this challenge?

What are some of your emotional “triggers”? What, if anything, “set you off” in the past month and how did you deal with that? While remembering to be self-compassionate, describe what happens to your inner state as you contemplate this question.

If you’re dealing with a difficult situation, what is your inner narrative on the subject? Are you telling yourself a true story? How do you think you might be able to let go of a perspective that comes from ego?

In the past month, have you experienced the energy of “resistance” in the face of unpleasant news? How did you deal with that? How has this changed since you began our course curriculum?
There are two dimensions to who you are. One dimension is your human side—your personality, your stories, and your psychological and emotional conditioning. As you awaken, you realize that in addition to your human side, there is a deeper dimension to who you are—the “Deep I.” The “Deep I” is the timeless Being that you are.

This section of the curriculum examines how, as our spiritual journey unfolds, we are able to consciously connect to and become aware of our timeless origin and fathomless Being. We are able to continually live in connectedness with that dimension.

**TOPICS INCLUDE**

- Awakening to the deeper dimension of who you really are—your oneness with everything in existence
- How to prevent your attention from being absorbed by the addictive stream of thinking
- Tuning in to your essence identity to solve problems and work through challenges
- Visualizing and creating what you want from the depth of your Being
- Allowing your mind to become an extension of Universal Consciousness
- Why the state of consciousness you bring to any experience is what matters most
Practices

23. MEDITATE ON AN OBJECT In this month’s video Eckhart shares a story of his first “meditation,” when during his teenage years he would gaze at the night sky and thinking would naturally subside. For those with a regular meditation practice, Eckhart recommends practicing “object meditation” to help cultivate focused and sustained attention and inner stillness. The object of your meditation can be anything of your choosing, from a physical object to an inner object such as a mantra, prayer, or the classic inquiry, “Who am I?” Set aside 15–30 minutes to practice, and allow stillness to naturally arise and deepen as the mind becomes more settled.

In addition, because of the commonalities between outer space and inner space, Eckhart points us to the awe-inspiring vastness of the nighttime sky as a particularly effective object of meditation. “Consciousness is formless and timeless,” he explains. “So by focusing attention on that formless, mysterious expanse of outer space, you can become aware of that in you that is the inner equivalent: inner spaciousness, the ‘Deep I.’” We recommend you give yourself five to ten minutes on any given evening to practice this form of contemplation, where the entirety of the nighttime sky becomes the object of your meditation.

24. PAY ATTENTION TO SILENCE AND STILLNESS Eckhart recommends that we make it a practice to pay attention to silence and stillness whenever possible. As with the preceding practice, in this exercise consciousness itself becomes the “content” of our attention. Since it’s rare to experience true silence, orient your attention to the spaces around the sounds that do arise. You can also practice with certain styles of music like the shakuhachi flute of Japan, attending not only to the rise and fall of the notes, but to the spaces of stillness that connect them. This offers a portal to the experience of consciousness being conscious of itself—the direct realization of the “Deep I.” We encourage setting aside time for a “listening session” with your favorite music. See if you can hear things differently when listening from a place of stillness. While Presence is never an endurance competition, experiment with how long you can experience the flowing sounds of the notes and the spaces between them without engaging the thinking mind.

25. THINK EFFECTIVELY Eckhart has said that his greatest “accomplishment” is his capacity to think only when he chooses to do so. And as you may have already discovered, it is entirely possible to think while maintaining spacious awareness. But it usually requires practice. “If you want to do some very powerful, very effective thinking,” teaches Eckhart, “you learn to step back and forth into and out of thought.”
Eckhart recommends that the next time you have something specific to think about, see if you can periodically leave your thinking and step back into stillness or the "Deep I"—the space of not knowing. As always, start with simple things, such as preparing your grocery list or planning your agenda for the day. Make it your intention to bring together the dimension of stillness and the act of thinking. This opens the door to what Eckhart describes as "empowered action plus empowered vision"—the arising of insights and choices that are blocked as long as we’re coming from an egoic mindset.

26. NON-ATTACHMENT AND LETTING GO As long as we have an attachment to form of any kind, teaches Eckhart, we will not have a deeper experience of who we really are. If we are attached to our sense of personal identity, for example, that will become an obstacle to realizing the "Deep I." The journey of awakening is a journey of letting go. Our true identity is in the formless dimension beyond the reach of the conceptual mind.

Our continual practice, therefore, is to "experience things and let them go," as Eckhart puts it. If an experience is enjoyable, enjoy it while it lasts but let it go when it’s over. If an experience is unpleasant, be with it in the moment; but when it ends, let it end. Keep some awareness on your body and see if you can remain physically relaxed about letting things go. The physical body tends to contract when we mentally resist letting something go, so physical tension might be a sign of psychological attachment.

When it comes to practicing non-attachment, start with the little things and work your way up to the big ones. The formula is to experience what you’re experiencing and then let go. Non-attachment is never about indifference; instead, we are able to fully experience our lives because we are deeply present for the moment in front of us, instead of being lost in thoughts about the past or future. "Everything in the world of form is subject to impermanence and disappearing," reminds Eckhart. "But finding that which is eternal, everlasting, brings 'the peace that passes all understanding.'"
Reflections

How has your capacity to step out of the stream of thought changed in the past four months? Are you better able to notice when your attention is becoming absorbed unconsciously? How has your relationship to your thought patterns shifted since starting the curriculum? Are you thinking more? Less?

When dealing with your daily tasks and responsibilities, have you been able to bring together your intellectual mind with your awareness of the deeper intelligence that arises from the "Deep I"? Reflect on the past few months in terms of where you felt aligned with this wisdom versus situations where you felt disconnected.

With respect to non-attachment and "letting go," describe some of your experiences over the recent past. Where has this proven exceptionally challenging? Was it easier at other times, and if so, why?

Next month will be our final month in The School of Awakening. Reflect on how your journey has shifted in terms of your experience of the "Deep I" and your ability to live your daily life from a place of stillness and connectedness with Being. How has your inner state changed in the past five months? How is this transformation expressing itself in your outer life?
As we prepare to conclude our journey and our work together, we rejoin for our second four-day event to inspire and illuminate our next steps after the course.

This closing month invites each one of us to do our part as “bringers of consciousness” wherever we live, in service of the moment before us.

We recognize that while we have done great work so far, in many ways our work is only beginning.

As we conclude The School of Awakening, we will celebrate our time together even as we understand that each new day we are fortunate to have will bring its own challenges and opportunities to live from a place of deep awareness.

TOPICS INCLUDE

> Becoming the seed for awakening—how consciousness grows in and through you
> Who awakens anyway?
> Becoming an "ambassador for awakening"
> How to use the collective energy of a community or group to accelerate awakening in a conscious way
> Creating a healing energy field that expands into your family and work life
> Transcending the beliefs that impede our collective awakening
Reflections

What is your greatest practical takeaway from your participation in *The School of Awakening*?

Where has your life changed in an unexpected way? How might you continue the momentum you’ve built?

What practices were the most helpful for you during the program and why?

Where to from here? Where do you sense you are being called to serve the larger whole on our collective journey of awakening?