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Lifewheel: Your Choices at Life's Every Turn

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Lifewheel

Your Choices at Life's Every Turn

- Needy Responder
- Successful Conformist
- Reflective Individualist
- Spiritually Mature Conscient

Kathy Kouzmanoff

"Kathy, this is excellent."

-Joseph Dispensa

"Easy to read, very insightful and helpful."

- Sr. Marion Abing

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Lifewheel

*Your Choices at
Life's Every Turn*

Kathy Kouzmanoff

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29 Responder Focus

Scattered

Focus is the ability to direct your attention. It is the key to your personal development. With it, you can concentrate your mind to think logically, take in details, manage your life, achieve goals and overcome obstacles. Focus also enables you to use your feelings to help you assess life situations. You sense when it is safe to open your heart in love and friendship and when it isn't. These mind/heart skills give you a sense of self-confidence and inner freedom.

Responders aren't very good at focusing. Their attention easily flits from one thing to another, all on its own. A scattered mind feels like too much stimulation, too many possibilities, too much pressure, too many contradictory directions, too many demands, impulses, obsessions and compulsions. In short, too much!

This scattered mind can be exhausting. You may be driven to keep up with the wild, restless movement that is in the driver's seat of your life. You may not be aware that your mind is leading you around, like a kite in the wind. You may try to keep up, probably not realizing how much is being asked of you, and how impossible it is to keep up. Your restless mind scatters you and wears you out.

Being driven and restless can also seem adventurous and a lot of fun. You do what you want to do, when you want to do it. You can get high satisfying the whims of the moment, without regard practicality, affordability or those around you. Crises are bound to develop from poor management of your life. Advertising and propaganda are aimed at just such minds, manipulating the chaos in them.

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This restless adventure may seem like freedom, but is it? The mind, having this undisciplined life of its own is really in charge, not a free person. If you aren't aware of how wild the mind is, simply sit for a few moments from time to time and pay attention to its goings on, as it flits from this to that.

That the mind is easily influenced and impressionable is its admirable strength. That we are unaware of the mind's seemingly fickle ways is our unfortunate weakness. Much of human development is about becoming aware of yourself and learning to tame the scattered mind. It is the basis of time management and successful goal setting. As you become more self-reliant, you focus on things in a receptive, creative and integrative way. In maturity, regular inner practices help you achieve a clear and open being. Inner freedom, connectedness and joy are the result.

49 Conformist Focus

Intensifying Concentration

Focus is the ability to direct your attention in the way you choose. For the conformist, the ability to concentrate one's attention is absolutely key to being smart, savvy, sassy and successful. How is it key? It is the basis of getting what you want, in work or love. Focus allows you to think logically and attune to others emotionally. This deeply enhances your sense of internal freedom and well-being, creating a basis from which to experience wide-ranging interconnectedness and even joy.

Is all this possible? Yes.

The practices of intensifying focus go by many names in various growth traditions. In conventional society we talk about focus, time management or success training. In psychology we refer to strengthening ego. In religion we talk about building character. In the ox-herding stories of the eastern Taoist/Zen tradition, these practices are referred to as taming the ox.

The mind is a wandering gypsy, full of unbounded spirit, universal sympathies and aristocratic freedom. It is the great dream machine, the autonomous participant in a universal consciousness, and the creator of breakthrough theories and improbable accomplishments. Such astonishing powers are between our own two ears! The mind even provides its own inner system of stabilizing all of this flexible potential, through its capacity for mindfulness.

So, for the conformist to narrow down all this vast potential into intensifying one's personal focus is in itself a major achievement. It takes years of social conditioning to forge this socially favored path of intensified focus. The mighty brain doesn't forget its larger than life nature, however, as we learn to narrow our focus. The mind sneaks in its escapes into its wider horizons through luscious daydreaming and simply wandering where it will. These forays of the wandering monkey brain may make more sense than we know. This balancing act goes on from minute to minute, in a mind that integrates its many capacities. It is fluid, adaptable, creative, stable and capable of doing your conscious bidding.

So keeping focused on one's chosen objectives is really very challenging. You are giving up part of the present to live in the future. It requires a sharp focus of your minds' eye to see this future. And to achieve your goals, you have to bring them into focus over and over again. This is intensifying focus.

You can do all of this only if you have a key factor of emotional intelligence, which is the capacity to delay present gratification for future payoff. Give up the marshmallow now for the bigger payoff later! If you can keep the sharply defined goal, break it into smaller achievable parts and follow disciplined routines necessary to accomplish the tasks and achieve your goal, the big payoff is yours! These are the simple habits of intensifying focus that achieve sweet success.

Social networks of all sorts enhance staying on task. And we like it! Conformists thrive on working with other people to synergize efforts. Intensifying focus is simply shifted to the group effort. Excellent habits and the rewards of achievement now have a group, cooperative playing field.

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Intensifying focus is one way of seeing, of seeing with the eye of the mind. It is the eye of planning, of logic, of the scientific. In focusing the eye of the heart, you look to ways of belonging, of nurturing, of bonding, of attuning to others.

There are other ways of seeing as well. There is also the eye of the soul. It is open to entirely new ways of perceiving and expressing, open to being inspired and integrating many modes of being, in distinctive, creative ways. The eye of the Spirit opens to pure being, with an aware, open and interconnected focus.

Your skills at intensifying focus and staying on task, will serve you well, no matter what other eye you open, no matter where you are in the spiral of life.

69 Individualist Focus

Integrating

Focus, your ability to direct your attention, is becoming richer. No longer do you simply focus your attention on your chosen goals or discipline. You are beginning to integrate seemingly disconnected realities in your life, parts that before just seemed to be a jumble of contradictions, which seemed to make no sense at all.

You experience yourself standing as mediator between the outer world and your inner world. You experience both. Sometimes they seem to be amazingly different worlds. You find that you actually want to be a mediator, to bring these disparate worlds together. You find that you are consciously cooperation with something within you that already is creating coherence among your worlds, beyond your effort. This mysterious weaving is layered, complex, rich and satisfying.

As mediator between worlds, you have many eyes. You have the eye of body, protecting you physically and emotionally. You have the eye of mind, logic and achievement. You have the eye of heart, feeling and belonging. Now the eye of soul is opening. It is your inner eye, receptive, open to inspiration and the richness of inner realities. Somehow, in ways beyond the conscious mind, your soul begins to expand your sense of things and begins to make sense of your expanded experience. In some ways, being the mediator is also being the observer, the witness to many ways of experiencing reality.

This soul focus has new ways to integrate your life. You begin to sense a story that you are living. You see that your story helps you

to understand yourself and the world. It may not be a story that you choose, but it starts putting the pieces together. Your story may even remind you of stories of other times and places. Knowing the story satisfies. You start to recognize the story by seeing yourself in literature, movies and others' experiences.

You see that your story creates insight and meaning. The story has patterns and symbols that give insight into your experience. The patterns and symbols of your story start to bring the outer and the inner worlds together. Philosophers may call this existentialism. Psychology may call it individuation or being authentic. Religion finds this the stuff of metaphysics, mythology or spirituality. Neurobiology sees it as the function of the prefrontal cortex of the brain, the seat of mindfulness. The brain acts as a storyteller, a great interweaver of all the various parts of your living.

Yet, despite all these traditions of personal knowing, how can you be sure of the meaning of your life, or where you are in the spiral of life? As with all things personal, you are the final judge of your own experience. Does your story ring true for you?

An especially powerful way of integrating inner and outer worlds is your nighttime dreams. Carl Jung thought they came from the center point of our psyches, the Self, and gave us compensation, balance and direction, especially if we work with them consciously. In working with dreams consciously, we are basically making associations with the various dream images, amplifying what comes to mind with the images. There is usually an "aha" inside us that signals a meaningful insight. Insight satisfies, and often leads to inspiration to act. If you take dreams as a kind of inner guidance or wisdom, you can integrate their insight into your life. Jungians call this process "individuation," this hammering together of the inner and the outer, the conscious and the unconscious.

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Integrating the disconnected parts of your life into a story is something that we do over and over in our lives, little by little. The more we integrate, the richer the story and the more fascinating to listeners. This is the work of artists, of writers and of every one of us. We are all storytellers.

The symbols, that move us and by which we live, motivate us powerfully, be they from the media, family, government, pop culture, religion, nature or dreams. Symbols link the individual who often feels isolated and powerless, to that unites, something moving, inspiring and meaningful.

This pattern of our little, personal self, linking to something bigger, is the very heart of being an individualist. Our true story is the one that makes sense for us, integrating the world within with the world without. That we are creatures who can make sense of our lives, and tell that story to others, makes life beautiful. Our souls open to the astonishing sweetness of life. We are no longer closed buds, or unripe, bitter fruit. We are open, ripe and beautiful, nourishing ourselves and nourishing others who are open to receive the richness that we are.

89 Conscient Focus

Open Focus

You have tamed your wandering mind. In the beginning it was headstrong and scattered. You learned to concentrate, to set goals and achieve them and to create a successful life. Deeper awareness beckoned to be integrated into your understanding. You opened your eyes to worlds within, more subtle and powerful, of inspiration, passion, symbolism and meaning. Worlds without became more complex, with much that was contradictory, hidden, compromised, unknown and no longer you. Finally a personal freedom within you became more real. This personal freedom center gave you the choice of observing all things, but not being pulled in by all things.

You are both centered and open in your focus. At the center you are at peace, secure and free. Your freedom allows you your emptiness, your receptivity, your openness. Your personal liberation that allows your open focus is referred to in many traditions. Philosophy calls it going beyond or transcending or freedom. Spirituality calls it God. In the Taoist ox-herding pictures, this personal mastery of your self is pictured as taming an ox. First the ox is wild. Then you tame it. Finally, there is no ox and no you in the picture, just an empty circle. In the final picture you happily return to the marketplace with helping hands, finding Buddha Nature everywhere.

Your open mind is strong now, made so by the disciplined practices that have brought you this far. Your inner freedom gives you many

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choices for focus. You can concentrate on one thing. You can practice insight meditation, learning from the ongoing flow of your awareness. You can enter altered states. You can bring inner and outer worlds together through symbols and stories. You may choose to become one with the object of your focus, be it your beloved, your work, nature, an inner character or God. You can focus on your breath in order to stop thoughts, and access a wordless, deeper consciousness, that brings first equanimity, and then joy. You can be in effortless clear awareness. You, in your personal freedom center, choose.

Open focus is not about “coming to terms with things as they are.” Things are as they are and you are open to the fact that it is so. Whether inner or outer, personal or social, there is simply your open, pure consciousness. It is as though your focus is that of Spirit in time, for the moment, beyond your personal concerns, not limited by your personal self. You participate in a larger, universal mind, one shared by all. Your personal freedom is strong enough and stable enough to experience this wider access, while maintaining your capacity to switch back to your everyday personal life.

With this eye of Spirit you often perceive things not known from your merely personal life. You may intuit the inner life of plants, of animals, of minerals. Dreams may give you insights and experiences reserved for shamans, foreign cultures, gifted scientists or mystic saints. You may remember things long past. You may know the future. You sense what people are thinking. You might do remote viewing, seeing from afar. You see auras, perceive subtle energies and are able to engage them. You may do healings. You may even perceive additional worlds beyond our familiar time and space dimension.

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All of this open focus has given you unusual experiences, those shared with mystics and visionaries. That you know such mystery and beauty that is beyond words to express, moves you to deep respect and awe. This open focus allows you to access the sacred, beyond all conditioning. The personal and the universal are yours. This small self, maturing into open focus, is capable of infinite richness.

Compare needy responder, successful conformist, reflective individualist and spiritually mature views of your inner and outer worlds. Learn how others see you. Handle personal differences. Resolve time and timelessness. Your many-faceted life's integrated in 100 easy to read, short chapters.

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