



Module #3 of 10—*Short Version*

UK Extension's
Universe of
Possibilities™

SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS

The Way of Peace

Threats from nuclear-armed nations, wars that bring untold pain, a worldwide battle against terrorism, millions and millions of human beings killed by their own in the last 100 years alone, and epidemic levels of anxiety, rage, and family violence. Has there ever been a time when the wisdom and healing of peace were more needed?

Defensive wars are sometimes necessary; but peace, which begins in the human heart, can overcome all. This is good news, for it means we each have a small but critical role to play in creating a tide of peace that will help to heal the cancer of violence that has eaten so deeply into the fabric of our society.

Peace is an inside-out job. The more serenity and inner calmness we experience, the more the blessings of peace radiate into our relationships and activities. Peace is not dependent on outward circumstances, the behavior of others, or the absence of illness. It is the ability to accept with composure whatever challenges come our way. Peace is a state of vibrant tranquility, a gentle energy that carries enormous strength.

Inner peace is the ideal springboard for all activities. Whether you are in athletic competition, giving a major speech, listening to a friend, or playing with young children, if you are calm inside you'll carry out your activities with more skill and greater joy.

Target of Life. Look at the Target of Life symbol that appears at the upper left side of this page. Put yourself on the Target in the center of the heart. Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light. From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You feel peaceful, energetic, creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

However, when difficulties arise and things don't go your way, you're likely to be pulled off center into the darker areas of the Target. You say and do things you regret. Your immune system weakens and your productivity declines. You lose touch with what's really important to you. Unhealthy stress increases and your sensitivity toward others decreases. And the further away from the center you move, the worse it gets! You experience more heaviness and darkness, more fear and negativity. That's why it's so important to catch early signs of stress and to use all of your creativity to stay as centered as possible.



7 Core Principles



- 1 The evidence is clear: Inner peace and the serenity it brings are excellent for your physical health, your mental sharpness, your spiritual attunement, and your relationships with others.
- 2 Absence of inner peace and the resulting stress damage your physical well-being, impede clear thinking, dull your spiritual sensitivities, and play havoc with relationships of all sorts.
- 3 To thrive individually and collectively, we must intelligently slow the often hectic pace of today's society and build consistent periods of quiet time into our daily lives.
- 4 While a pleasant environment encourages tranquility, you can learn to feel a deep inner peace even when life is tough, people mistreat you, and illness or disaster strikes.
- 5 Being peaceful is a skill we can learn, teach others, and weave into the fabric of our society.
- 6 There are many effective ways to foster inner and outer peace, and by regularly applying peace-giving methods that you find appealing, you reap innumerable personal benefits and help to reduce today's unacceptable levels of stress and violence.
- 7 Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

Peace is a dynamic force of tremendous power and vibrant grace. It is the answer to so many of the problems that plague us as individuals, as nations, and as a world family. When we overlook this answer because it seems too simplistic, we make a big mistake.

The fact that our world is laced with many varieties of violence is obvious; there's no need to repeat the grim and all-too-familiar statistics. However, the least apparent and most common form of violence is seldom brought clearly into focus.

Although not accompanied by gunshots and physical injury, emotional and mental abuse are by far the most widespread forms of violence.

In a largely invisible war, everyday meanness, harsh words, and damaging thoughts wound people deeply,

and in vast numbers. Emotional and mental abuse can shatter self-esteem, tear into the heart of close relationships, and kill untold opportunities. Whether it's the direct hit of a belittling remark or a constant barrage of resentment-filled thoughts, the cost to society is beyond estimation.

THE POWER OF PEACE

The many forms of violence prevalent in our world, and often in our hearts, are like a raging fire that causes untold pain and destruction in a coastal city. Peace is water from the ocean that can reduce and help control the terrible flames. Thus far we have, here and there, cooled down the inferno of violence, but the waters from the ocean of peace are unlimited and are there for the taking. We obviously cannot

eliminate violence from the world, but we can greatly reduce its prevalence by flooding our hearts, our families, and our world community with peace.

Peace is as soft and gentle as moonbeams; but like thunder and lightning, it carries astonishing strength. Peace is sure-footed, patient, and unafraid. Peace is tolerant of various viewpoints and knows that disagreements not only are inevitable, but also, when resolved early, can spark needed changes, healthy, new understandings, and important discoveries that benefit us all.

MAKE FRIENDS WITH CONFLICT

We can't make conflict go away; it's part of life. Try to welcome conflict as a friend and teacher, realizing that each disagreement is an opportunity to grow in wisdom, compassion, and strength.

To handle conflict well, we must keep an open mind, stay on our toes, and pay attention to our intuition, those hunches and instincts that lead toward our greatest good. Sometimes a conflict isn't worth bothering with. Sometimes it's best to avoid dealing with a conflict until we are rested and calmer—more centered on the Target of Life. Sometimes conflict is a gift that opens the door to new and wonderful possibilities. Sometimes it's wise to seek outside help or to agree to disagree, and sometimes it's good to say with an open mind, "Let's try it your way."

*International war
is the sum total of millions of
individual wars raging in the minds
of the people, between what is selfish
and what is selfless. To the extent
that you and I develop selflessness
in our own hearts, to that extent we
contribute to peace in our family,
community, country, and world.*

Eknath Easwaran

CATCH STRESS EARLY

A lack of peace often shows up as restlessness, agitation, touchiness, and other indicators of negative stress. The key is to catch these early signs of tension

before they get the best of you. Learn to tune into the signals of stress as early as possible. Then move back to the center of the Target of Life by calming yourself in a way that works for you, such as breathing deeply, taking a break, praying, thinking positive thoughts, talking it over, or doing something physical such as walking or working in the garden. ***Remember that laughter, having fun, enjoyable exercise, and sufficient high-quality rest are some of the best stress busters we could ask for.***

*Being at peace is not the same
as being placid. You can be
assertive, firm, even passionate
and bold, yet be at peace.*

Carol Ann Morrow

BREATHWORK—A KEY TO PEACE AND WELL-BEING

Simple, pleasant, effective, and free, breathwork is an excellent way to promote peace, balance, and well-being. When we are stressed, our abdominal muscles tighten. Our breathing speeds up and becomes shallow. The breath shifts from the belly area up into the chest. But unless we are running from wild tigers, this type of "fight or flight" breathing only worsens our stress.

Fortunately, you can take charge and breathe in a healthier way. Relax your stomach muscles and take deeper, slower breaths. Breathing peacefully is a skill. The more you practice, the more skilled you become. Reflecting his strong belief in the practice, renowned physician and Harvard-educated author Andrew Weil says, "***There is no single more powerful—or more simple—daily practice to further your health and well-being than breathwork.***" Below are a variety of breathing-related, peace-bestowing skill builders:

- ◆ Dr. Weil explains that the secret of increasing vitality-giving breath is to exhale more fully. "By squeezing more air out of your lungs, you will automatically take more air into them." To do this you have to use the intercostal muscles between the ribs. Try this: Breathe in fully through your nose and exhale through your mouth. At the end of your exhalation, use your rib muscles to squeeze out a

little more air . . . and then a little more. Now enjoy the invigorating feeling of your body naturally taking a truly full breath.

*The way of peace is the way of love.
Love is the greatest power on earth.
It conquers all things.*

Peace Pilgrim

- ◆ Here's another exercise suggested by Dr. Weil: As you go through your day, occasionally notice how you are breathing. ***Strive to make your breaths deeper, slower, quieter, and more regular.*** With practice, you will begin breathing like this much more frequently. As Dr. Weil explains, "Your nervous system will function more smoothly, and all your organs will operate more harmoniously."
- ◆ Being positive, knowing how to concentrate, and feeling self-confident all contribute to inner peace and outward calmness. Here's a simple, yet powerful, exercise that simultaneously teaches all these qualities: Sit quietly in a comfortable, erect position. Close your eyes and feel your breath as it

goes in and out. As you inhale, say to yourself, "I." As you exhale, silently say, "Can." Make no effort at all to control your breathing. Stay relaxed and alert. When your mind wanders to other things, gently bring it back to feeling your breath go in and out. Consider using the "I Can" exercise once or twice a day for five to 15 minutes. If you have a strong spiritual orientation, you may wish to substitute the wording of "I Can" with whatever works best for you and acknowledges your deepest spiritual beliefs.

- ◆ Practice "belly breathing." As you slowly breathe in, let your belly expand like a balloon. As you easily exhale, let your belly come in. It's important that your belly muscles stay soft and pleasantly relaxed. Belly breathing—or more technically, diaphragmatic breathing—is nature's way. It calms and energizes. Make it a habit.

BE A PEACEMAKER. Do your best to live as a peacemaker by tuning into your inner calmness, by refraining from all unnecessary complaints and criticism, by promoting understanding and flexibility, and by freely sharing your talents and abundance.



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10 Educational Modules

UK Extension's Universe of Possibilities™: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities.

1. **Your Vision Map**
2. **Making the Growth Choice**
3. **The Way of Peace**
4. **Heart Intelligence**
5. **The Freedom of Self-Discipline**



6. **Embracing This Present Moment**
7. **Accepting and Loving Your Body**
8. **Healthy Relationships**
9. **Unleashing Your Creativity**
10. **Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing**

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