DAY 1

*The everyday experience of reality starts with perceptions—sounds, colors, shapes, textures, tastes, and smells.*

Waking up is supposed to be effortless. But it’s important to know where to start. There is no better place to begin than where you are right this moment. In fact, we will wind up in trouble if we pretend that there is any other starting point. You are experiencing your life as it is, a flow of experiences that begins with the five senses.

*For Today*

Get in touch with the basics. Sit for a moment and be with your simplest experience of light, warmth, the smells wafting your way, the taste of food. Relax into the experience. Just observe. The more you are able to relax, the more effortless waking up will be. Relaxing into the moment is the key. In a relaxed state your mental activity calms down, and observing your direct experience happens naturally.

**YOUR EXPERIENCE:**

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DAY 2

The range of human perception is a narrow bandwidth of raw sensations.

The five senses are our window on reality, but the opening is a slit, not a picture window. “Seeing is believing” usually only applies to a small fraction of the raw data bombarding the eye every second. The same is true for the other four senses. They conspire to deliver a narrow bandwidth of reality. To expand the bandwidth to increase our perception, is one reason for waking up.

For Today

Get in touch with how narrow your sense of reality actually is. Cup your hands over your ears and notice how muffled the world is. Put on sunglasses and notice how dim the world becomes. Turn off the lights at night and cautiously, with small steps, try to navigate a room in your house you are very familiar with. When you take your hands away from your ears, remove your sunglasses, and turn on the lights, your awareness of everything around you expands. Waking up expands reality even more.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 3

All biological organisms have their own unique bandwidth of sensory experience.

Experience defines us all, and since we are tuned in to only one bandwidth of reality—call it the Me Channel—our identity is also narrow. Other living things are tuned in to different bandwidths, giving them an existence we can barely imagine. But humans can change the channel at will. Reality is only as narrow as our awareness. When you wake up, you are tuned in to the entire bandwidth. Then reality is unlimited.

For Today

Take a moment to listen to the birds singing. Each bird is telling its story. Birdsong communicates information from parent to chick, announces the limits of territory, attracts a mate, signals danger, and identifies which species the bird belongs to. Notice that you do not understand a single thing on Bird Channel. If it is winter or you hear no birds, consider a dog sniffing the air. A dog’s nose can tell it who has walked by, what was on that person’s shoes, and when the incident occurred. Notice that your nose gathers none of the information that comes across Dog Channel.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: 
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DAY 4

Our physical body is also a perceptual experience.

The Me Channel tells you that you have a body. The body you see and feel, the sensations that come through the nervous system, the locations of pleasure and pain—these signals are constantly broadcast on the Me Channel. The body is not a thing; it is a confederation of perceptions. Your mind unites these fragmented perceptions into a coherent image in time and space. If your mind didn’t do that, the Me Channel would just be transmitting noise.

For Today

Take a moment to perceive your body directly. Close your eyes and sit quietly. Let your attention roam from sensation to sensation. Lift your arm and feel its weight. Rub your fingers together and feel their softness and the texture of the skin. Hear your breath and your heartbeat. It doesn’t matter how many signals you pick up, or whether your body feels nice to you or not nice. You have contacted the real body you have. The experience of the body is the body. Everything else is mental interference. When you wake up, you will accept and enjoy the experience of the body for itself, which is blissful.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ______________________________

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DAY 5

By itself each perceptual experience is a unique, evanescent, ungraspable, momentary sensation. Our senses take snapshots of reality.

Life gives us a constant flow of perceptions that we live by. The five senses are the pipeline through which everything flows. But it’s not like a continuous flow of water from a faucet. Sensations are much more like rain, which falls one drop at a time. We make sense of life using fleeting thoughts and sensations. We ignore how evanescent every perception really is—each sensation starts to fade as soon as it is noticed. Every thought has already vanished by the time it registers. By waking up, we stop ignoring what is actually happening all the time. The need to turn fleeting sensations into a running movie or story fades away.

For Today

Put a grain of salt or sugar on your tongue. Notice how the taste starts to diminish after the first strong taste sensation. Pay attention to how your salivary glands quickly reacted and how your throat wanted to swallow. This puts you in touch with how brief and temporary experience is. But here’s the real point. Try to taste what was on your tongue before you placed the salt or sugar on it. You can’t. That taste, which you probably didn’t make note of when it occurred, has fled forever. Fleeting perceptions are the texture of life.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________
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DAY 6

The only constant in every snapshot of perception is the presence of being and awareness.

Snapshots don’t take themselves—there has to be a photographer behind the camera. No matter how many thousands of photos a professional photographer takes, he is the constant behind the lens. His job is to look, arrange the setting, place the lights, focus, and decide if the image satisfies him. You do the same with reality. Your senses deliver snapshots of raw data, which change in endless ways. The only constant is you, seeing, arranging, turning random bursts of perception into something you can relate to. Most of this happens automatically, but when you wake up, you see what you’re doing. Then you have much more freedom to create.

For Today

Get back in touch with the basic units of experience. Sit for a moment and be with your simplest experience of light, warmth, the smells wafting your way, the taste in your mouth. Relax into the experience. Notice each sensation spontaneously, wherever your attention wanders. The more you are able to relax, the more effortless waking up will be. Waking up in itself is a totally relaxed, spontaneous state, open to whatever happens here and now.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________
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The stringing together of perceptual snapshots creates a sense of continuity, the same way a movie is created from the rapid sequence of still frames.

When the invention of motion pictures revealed that our eyes can be fooled by stringing together a series of snapshots at twenty-four frames per second, a deeper truth about reality was also revealed. The human brain works by the firing of neurons. Each firing is a burst of energy, followed by a pause, then the next burst. The bursts slice reality into bits of information from the five senses. When a train races past you, you are not seeing it in motion. You are seeing bursts of information in your brain that give the illusion of motion. Likewise, you don’t hear continuous sounds.

The continuity of your life is a necessary illusion. We have to see the world in motion so that we can live in motion, not frozen bits of sensation. Right now you are experiencing pictures and stories created in your mind through the same piecing-together process. When you wake up, these pictures and stories will be seen for what they are: artificial constructs of the mind. You will live from the “real” reality that is beyond pictures and stories—consciousness itself.

For Today

Sit in front of a moving image on your TV or computer—this can be anything, from people walking around to a news or sports event. Focus on something moving across the screen from left to right. In reality there is no person moving across the screen; not a single photon of light is moving across the screen. Instead, bursts of color are happening, each one totally stationary. By stringing these bursts in a sequence, the illusion
of motion is created. Now notice how hard it is to see the actual process taking place before your very eyes. Your mind must see motion because, since you were born, the world has been a series of pictures in motion—this is how conditioned you are to accept an illusion as reality.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: _______________________
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DAY 8

The physical body and the appearance of the physical world are created in the mind as constructs from sensations that are intermittent and ephemeral.

In daily life we do not investigate how the mind creates a three-dimensional world out of random, meaningless bits of sensation. Starting with the simple world a baby experiences, everything gets more and more complicated. A newborn cannot focus on its hand, which looks like a pink blob floating in the air. In time the blob becomes a hand attached to the body; it acquires a name; it develops many skills. Medicine studies it down to every tissue and cell.

This buildup of knowledge occurs in the mind and is created by the mind. A naked hand has no story to tell; it has no developed skills. Everything a hand can become when it belongs to a skilled painter, sculptor, circus performer, chef, or welder is mind-made. The same goes for the whole body and the physical world. We construct virtual reality so that we can have the pictures and stories that are necessary for being human.

For Today

Take a sheet of ordinary 8½ × 11-inch paper and poke a pinhole in the center. If you hold the paper close to your eye, you can see the whole room through the pinhole—this is your mental picture of the room. Now hold the paper one or two inches from your eye, until you see only parts of familiar objects—just pieces of lamps, chairs, windows, and so on. Try to walk around the room seeing only these bits and pieces. It is quite difficult. Deprived of the picture your mind makes, the room is a disconnected jumble of fragmented images. Reflect on how you have used the
mind to construct the familiar three-dimensional world you accept at face value.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 9

The appearance of the body and the world are activities in consciousness—verbs, not nouns—constantly and rapidly changing.

When you enter a room, go to work, or take a stroll outdoors, the objects you see appear to be fixed and stable—but they aren’t. Your brain is constantly firing to keep the illusion of stability going. Your five senses cooperate by turning photons into pictures and air vibrations into recognizable sounds. In other words, you are constantly making the world. An ever-changing, endless process is taking place in your awareness. Therefore, the outer world is an ever-changing, endless process wearing the disguise of fixed, stable objects. By waking up, you see past the mask of matter, reconnecting with the creative process that makes the world.

For Today

Look at a photo of a friend, family member, or celebrity. Now turn it upside down. Notice that you cannot recognize the face anymore. A hitch has occurred in your brain, which is conditioned to recognize faces only right side up. There was a process to recognizing a face; the face itself is meaningless. Or imagine placing a photo on a turntable and setting it spinning (you can try this on a lazy Susan or a record player). Notice that you cannot make sense of the photo while it is revolving. The moving world has no reality until the mind constructs it into a human world. Constant change acquires the illusion of stability and nonchange.

YOUR EXPERIENCE:
DAY 10

The mental construct of the body and the world is the product of centuries of conditioning.

In daily life we accept the world as a given. Trees, mountains, clouds, and sky are simply there. But these are merely the scenery of virtual reality. Everything in the world beyond raw sensory data is rooted in mythology, history, religion, philosophy, culture, economics, and language. Raw sensation is overlaid with this complex conditioning. As a result, the body and the world we perceive have been interpreted in advance. They exist as extensions of the human drama. By waking up, you step out of the drama to be who you really are. You see that virtual reality is a kind of hand-me-down, which you no longer have to settle for.

For Today

Here is a simple exercise in perception. Contemplate the letter A. When you set eyes on it, you saw a simple sign made with three short strokes of a pen. But those strokes have no inherent meaning, as you can instantly determine by turning A on its side or upside down. The meaning of A is embedded in it. It is an ancient meaning, going back to the Phoenician alphabet. Mixed in is the Hebrew letter aleph, which stands for the beginning, creation, and God. A is synonymous with one, which connotes individuality and the start of arithmetic. A is a desirable grade in school, and if you earn enough As, you are likely to be well-educated and end up prosperous.

If a single letter of the alphabet carries so much history and so many implications, imagine how complex the fabric of the human world is. We inherit a wealth of meanings that hold the world together but also
become a burden. (Think of all the trouble caused by another letter of the alphabet, I.)

YOUR EXPERIENCE: __________________________
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The mind itself is nothing other than conditioned awareness.

Each of us was born into an interpreted world. Previous generations spent their lives giving everything a human meaning. Every newborn grows up by learning the ropes, and once you can navigate the world—walking, talking, making life choices, forming relationships—you find your place in virtual reality. At some point you would like to have your own unique experiences. “I want to be me” is a powerful incentive.

But the only way to have an experience is to use the mind, and everyone’s mind is totally conditioned. It had no choice. By learning the ropes, each of us sacrificed “I want to be me” in the name of “I want to fit in.” More than social pressure was at work. The rules of virtual reality require us to accept a shared set of pictures, stories, beliefs, and habits. By waking up, you get to be yourself beyond the rules. The “real” reality is always new and original.

For Today

Today the challenge is to have a thought that is totally your own. Such a thought cannot echo anything you’ve heard someone else say or anything you’ve read in a book. It can’t be couched in a familiar phrase. It must not grow out of memory, because then you would only be repeating the past. Faced with this simple challenge, you can see how tightly the conditioned mind holds you in its grip. There are well- tried escape routes, like imagination and fantasy, which get around the rules by not matching reality. There is another escape route, waking up, which allows you to be here now. In the eternal now the conditioned mind has no place.
DAY 12

Virtual reality is a web of relationships.

The physical world is all about relationships. Around them we create stories. A Christmas tree tells a story; the tree the ornaments are hung on is related to other evergreen trees, which leads back to the plant kingdom and the origins of life. There is nothing in the world that can be seen without being embedded in relationships spreading out in all directions. This web of relationships is the invisible net that holds everything together. Tangled inside the web, we create endless stories in an ongoing movie.

But how do you get out of the web? Humans dream of a realm like Heaven that allows the relative world to drop away forever. Heaven may be a dream, but a world beyond isn’t. By waking up, you find yourself in that world, which is consciousness itself. Beyond all created things lies the womb of creation.

For Today

Let your gaze roam the room and pick any object at random. Now in rapid succession, think of as many words as you can in thirty seconds that relate to the object. Let’s say you chose a table lamp. Words related to a table lamp: light, lightning bug, torch, Statue of Liberty, lamp beside the golden door, freedom, immigrants, Germany, Nazism, Hitler, World War II, and so on. Notice that the flow of words spreads out on its own, going in any and every direction. By a simple exercise in word association, you have woven one strand of the web that creates the known world.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 13

*The mind has entangled us in a virtual reality of our own making.*

In creation myths around the world, God or gods stand apart, looking down on the world they created. For humans, however, we created virtual reality and then stepped into it. The purpose of virtual reality was to allow us a double role, as both the authors of our own stories and the actors who play them out. The two roles are mind-created, and keeping them separate is confusing. When trouble arises, people ask themselves, “Did I do this to myself?” without being able to answer.

Entangled in virtual reality, we find it easier to simply go along and pretend we play only one role, the actor. Yet the role of author is far more important. Unfortunately, how to be an author has been largely forgotten. Life is too confusing already. By waking up, you clearly see your role in the creative process. You are no longer helpless or a victim, any more than Romeo and Juliet are victims of Shakespeare. They came to life in their author’s awareness, as you come to life every day in yours.

*For Today*

Put yourself back at the creative center of things. The next time you order food or ask to see something in a store, frame the situation this way: *I had the thought that put this situation in motion. I put the thought into words. The words caused another person to undertake a new action. That action prompts another action by the cooks in the kitchen (or the manufacturer who made the goods in a store), who are earning a living to create their own stories, and the sum total of these stories is human history. Therefore, at every moment, my thoughts are at the creative center of history.*

This is more than a new way to frame a commonplace activity. It is the truth. You are the creative center of things, ever and always.
DAY 14

The body, mind, and world, when seen directly and without interpretation, are actually one activity.

Even though we busy ourselves with a thousand things a day, seeing the world as one thing comes naturally. To a devout believer, the one thing is God’s creation. To most scientists, the one thing is the physical universe. But these are conditioned responses. Believers cannot consult God to confirm their belief, and scientists cannot confirm where time, space, matter, and energy come from. What if you look at the world directly, without a conditioned response? You would see that the one thing is awareness constantly modifying itself. Body, mind, and world are experiences in consciousness. This alone can be verified. Experience is the touchstone of reality. When you wake up, it becomes the only touchstone you need. You join the play of consciousness and revel in it.

For Today

The play of consciousness embraces all of creation. Today you can join the game as an enjoyable experience. Take a moment to do something that makes you happy—it could be lunch with a friend, appreciating the trees and sky, watching children on the playground. If your enjoyment comes from eating ice cream at midnight, that’s perfectly fine. Whatever you are doing, relax into your enjoyment and notice it. Enjoyment is the easiest way to be here now. Just by noticing your enjoyment, you have put yourself into the eternal play of consciousness.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 15

Upon close examination, no external world or physical body can be found independent of our perceptions.

We are so used to living with a divided self that it is a big step to see beyond it. The divided self tells you that you live in two worlds, one “in here” and one “out there.” But if reality is a single thing, this view is mistaken. Consciousness is the one thing. It unfolds as one reality. Knowing this, you have firm ground to stand on—your own awareness. The conditioned mind corrupts and distorts awareness. It colors your perceptions, forcing you to accept the division between the inner and outer worlds. Waking up clarifies the truth. All worlds are experienced in consciousness. There is no need to prove the existence of the physical world or not to prove it. You are here now, and that is enough.

For Today

It’s not difficult to merge the inner and outer worlds into one. Find a photo of yourself; it can be your driver’s license or a snapshot. Holding the photo in your hand, look at yourself in the mirror. Then look at yourself in the photo, and finally, see yourself in your mind’s eye. As you moved from seeing your physical body reflected in a mirror, captured on film, and inside your mind, each was an experience in consciousness. On that basis, there were not three different experiences. There was one experience being modified in three ways. Everything in life stands on the same ground, as experiences that are modified consciousness.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________
Since there is no independent physical world, everyday reality is a lucid dream taking place in the vivid now.

Dreams aren’t all cut from the same cloth. Some dreams are vague, barely more vivid than having a fleeting memory when you are awake. At the opposite extreme are so-called lucid dreams. When you’re having a lucid dream, you have no clue that it is a dream. You are fully immersed in it and, when you wake up, it’s hard to acknowledge that the dream wasn’t real. Likewise, virtual reality is a full-immersion experience. There are few clues to suggest that you are not fully awake.

For that reason, glimpses of clarity, moments of joy, creative insights, and the experience of meditation are precious. They suggest that you are immersed in a vivid, lucid dream. Waking up will come as a surprise—for many people, it’s a shock to realize that they’ve been asleep all their lives. Every passing moment was like experiencing the vivid now. Once awake, however, now becomes a window into pure consciousness. It doesn’t matter what fills the now. What matters is that you are fully awake to it.

For Today

Moments when you see through the spell/dream/illusion often happen spontaneously—they come upon you by surprise. There’s no set way to bring about such glimpses; the closest you can come is through meditation. Still, you can prepare the ground today for the seed of metareality experience. At any time, take a look around, smile to yourself, and say, “Imagine, this is all a dream, and I am the dreamer.” The smile is important. It’s like anticipating Christmas as a child. You
know something good is coming and, by reminding yourself, you open the way.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ________________________________
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DAY 17

Now isn’t a moment in time that can be grasped and held. Now is the rise and fall of awareness.

If you want to know who enforces the rules of virtual reality, the clock is a good place to start. The tick-tock of clock time slices life into segments of seconds, minutes, and hours. Once you identify with clock time, your life passes in seconds, minutes, and hours. Such an existence is mechanical and routine. Breaking out of virtual reality, now has to become a state of awareness, not a slice of bread. When you wake up, now is a presence; it is the unbroken experience of being here.

Experiencing this presence, you witness how the stream of consciousness delivers a sequence of fleeting sensations and perceptions. Dividing this stream of activity into seconds, minutes, and hours is a mental construct only. When you are awake, you pay more attention to the presence of awareness than to the fleeting events taking place in the mind.

For Today

Mental activity is very clingy. You have a stake in the thoughts, sensations, images, and feelings that pass through your mind. But you don’t have to have a stake in those thoughts, sensations, images, and feelings. Imagine that you are sitting on a commuter train looking out the window. As the scenery rushes by, you don’t see it by picking out each building, tree, car, or person. It’s all just the passing scenery. If you happen to notice something that stands out, it passes just as quickly as the things you don’t notice. Now instead of windows, substitute your eyes. You are sitting behind them watching the passing scenery. When you adopt this
position, which is known as “witnessing,” you approximate for a moment what the permanent state of being awake is like.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ______________________

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DAY 18

Clock time slices up the timeless, giving it beginnings and endings. As a result, there is birth, aging, and death.

All of virtual reality, from the atom to the human body to the universe, is a timeless process frozen in time. If you say, “I was born in 1961” or “The meeting starts promptly at three” or “The big bang occurred 13.8 billion years ago,” you are doing the same thing—freezing a constant fluid process into a beginning, which automatically brings a middle and an end. Beginning, middle, and end are mental constructs. What is the middle of blue? What was the last thing that happened before time began? When you wake up, being here is continuous—actually, it has always been continuous, until beginning, middle, and end were invented. It will come as a great relief to ditch those concepts. Not only will you find that you are living in the now, but birth, aging, and death will become irrelevant.

For Today

To step out of clock time into the timeless, take a moment and look at a color, say the blue of the sky. Try to see beyond the blue. Really try. You will notice that it is futile to try to think your way there. Mental activity is irrelevant. Nor does it matter if you actually see beyond the blue. By stopping your mind from interfering, you escaped clock time, so the only place you can be is timeless. Similarly, try to imagine a time when you didn’t exist. This will also stop the thinking mind from interfering. You will experience no time when you didn’t exist. Is there a better definition of eternity?
Reality is the endless activity of awareness modifying itself.

If someone walked up to you and said, “I want to be here now. Where’s it happening?” you’d be puzzled. “Now” isn’t a place on the map. Brain connections can be mapped in their precise locations, but there is no top, bottom, back, or front to awareness. The now is continuous because awareness is continuous. Only in virtual reality are limitations like beginnings and endings or birth and death imposed. When experienced directly, reality flows like a river. But you have to imagine it as a river that flows in a circle, without starting in the mountains and running to the sea.

When you are awake, even to describe awareness as a flow is too limiting. Awareness doesn’t need to be active. As it happens, activity is everywhere. Outside of meditation or unexpected moments of silence, the mind is constantly participating in the rise and fall of consciousness as it modifies itself. Beyond the constant buzz of activity, consciousness is silent, pure, unbounded, not needing to do anything. Upon waking up, you identify with pure consciousness, enjoying the calmness and security it brings.

For Today
Silent awareness is always with you, waiting to be noticed. Sit in a quiet place and say to yourself, “I am _______,” filling in the blank with your full name. With a brief pause between them, say the following things to yourself: “I am [first name],” then “I am,” then “Am,” and finally no thought. Without labels to identify with, the mind is quiet. As you experience this state, even for a moment, you have found your real
identity. The ego emerges from mental activity; your true self emerges from silent awareness.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ________________________

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Day 20

Time is only one kind of limitation. So are space, matter, and energy. Awareness itself is without any limitation.

Waking up is clearer today than in the past, when the process was considered so mysterious that it seemed totally paradoxical. As one ancient metaphor put it, wanting to wake up is like being a thirsty fish. The fish is thirsty only because it doesn’t realize that it is surrounded by the ocean. Likewise, a person seeking to wake up doesn’t realize that all limitations of the mind are the result of not knowing that the infinite ocean of consciousness is everywhere at every moment.

Limitation begins in the mind but is mirrored by time, space, matter, and energy. This mirroring effect holds good whether you are asleep or awake. The difference is that when you wake up, the physical universe is seen for what it really is, the play of consciousness. Consciousness has no form or boundaries. Being beyond labels and thoughts, it is inconceivable. It is also who you really are.

For Today

Hold up your hand and start moving it into various positions, each signifying a meaningful gesture. Act out the part of a police officer directing traffic, a teacher pointing to the blackboard, a lover caressing the beloved’s cheek, a chef whipping up an omelet—whatever strikes your fancy. Reflect on how your hand carried out whatever your imagination wanted it to. Mind and matter were different appearances of the same consciousness. Likewise, your personal reality consists of mind acting to coordinate time, space, matter, and energy. They express the same unlimited possibilities as human imagination.
DAY 21

Virtual reality arose from the human need to live in limitation. This need began the process that created the conditioned mind.

Limitation is part of virtual reality, and it seems totally convincing and necessary. You cannot fly like a bird; you can’t be rich by wishing it were so; if you are hit by a car, you will be seriously injured or killed. I’ve said that the conditioned mind edits reality so that it serves human needs. The infinite becomes finite. We are hemmed in by harsh realities. There is actually nothing wrong with editing the infinite into the finite—after all, you can’t think infinite thoughts all at once, even though you have the capacity to have infinite thoughts.

The problem is that we’ve forgotten that this editing was done by us. Virtual reality isn’t a given; it was manufactured. The setup is finite, and just as you can’t think infinite thoughts all at once, humans can’t physically do everything at once, say everything at once, or desire everything at once. The setup of virtual reality suits the self we think we have—and must have.

When you wake up, the picture is reversed. You realize that virtual reality is a construct. Only consciousness is a given. Only consciousness cannot be created. By waking up, you free yourself from the conditioned mind, the limited self, and the mind-forged limitations of virtual reality. In freedom you still cannot fly, become rich by wishing it were so, or avoid being injured if a car hits you. On the other hand, it’s a bad bet to declare that anything is impossible. Waking up takes you over a threshold. What awaits on the other side is a vast new territory of possibilities.
For Today

Sit for a moment and start to think of things that you’d like to do or be that are impossible. You might like to be fabulously wealthy or incredibly attractive or young again—the sky’s the limit. As each thing comes to mind, pause and say to yourself, “Why not? Why is this impossible?” Wait for a reply and let it unfold, telling you all the reasons you can’t have or be what you want.

Now ask yourself, “Who says I can’t?” There is no good answer to this question. Things are impossible not because anybody says so. They are impossible because the whole setup of virtual reality says so. All limitations are built into virtual reality. When anyone says that something is impossible, she is only upholding virtual reality. Who says you have to follow suit? Nobody, including yourself. When this realization sinks in, you begin to glimpse how free you really are.

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When infinite awareness is edited, form and phenomena appear (i.e., things we can see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and think about).

For the purposes of everyday life, infinity needed to be edited. Everyone agrees about that, but we forget that there was no rulebook or set of guidelines for editing reality. The only rules are self-imposed. Pure consciousness unfolded into the physical universe, imposing time, space, matter, and energy upon its creation. But pure consciousness didn’t believe it had to do things this way. Billions of other universes with different setups have been proposed by modern physics.

Knowing that rules are self-imposed was never in doubt at the level of pure consciousness. We inherited this certainty. Art and culture express the certainty that the human mind can construct any setup while also accepting the setup of the physical universe. This makes it seem that life has two compartments—the mental, which is unlimited, and the physical, which is limited. But that’s a mistake. A house isn’t separate from the desire to build a house and the knowledge of how it is done. Mental and physical are aspects of one thing: creative intelligence at play. When you wake up, you will see how creative intelligence works, and with fascinated curiosity you will become a co-creator of reality.

For Today
To become aware of how creative intelligence unfolds, start with a small object. Whether it is a nail, an earring, or the keys to your car, these things are ideas that took physical shape. Now consider something larger, like the Empire State Building or the Golden Gate Bridge. They too are ideas that took physical shape. Does it matter that an earring is
tiny and the Golden Gate Bridge immense? No. Creative intelligence isn’t large or small. Nor is it hard or soft, here but not there, visible or invisible. The ability to create is entirely self-contained, respecting no limitations of forms and shapes. Creativity needs only itself. Without creative intelligence, forms, shapes, and events couldn’t arise.

Now see yourself in the mirror and say to yourself, “I am infinite creativity that has taken on a form.” Stop identifying with the form and start identifying with the creativity. This is how you wake up.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 23

Every form and phenomenon is actually one thing: the modification of the formless, the infinite reduced to the finite, pure awareness given a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The world rewards big thinkers and gives them a place in history. By comparison with an Albert Einstein or a Leonardo da Vinci, everyone feels like a little thinker. But a big thinker isn’t necessarily the biggest thinker. The biggest thinker sees that reality is one thing, creation one process. That’s the whole picture in one view, which becomes your reality when you wake up.

The whole picture becomes clear when the mind stops constantly blurring your view with interfering thoughts, sensations, images, and feelings. They represent the back-and-forth between you and the outside world. When you wake up, the interference patterns fall away. You accept as a natural fact that infinite, formless pure consciousness is the source of all things. What makes this realization natural is that you see yourself as an expression of one thing, not a jumble of mental and physical activity.

For Today

If you see an object in the outside world, you view it from the outside. Wholeness—the one thing—has no outside. It also has no inside. Therefore, you can’t view it. Because you are it, you can’t even relate to wholeness in various ways, like accepting it or rejecting it, participating one day and taking time out the next. When you wake up, you know that you are the one thing. Yet even now you can stop relating to it in false ways.

Today, practice having no attitude toward your mind. Let thoughts arise and fall, and when you are tempted to have an attitude toward what is going on, don’t. Don’t say that one thought is good and another
bad. Don’t assign labels like smart, dumb, positive, or negative. The mind is none of those things. It is the flow of activity from the absolute. To label the mind is like saying that wholeness is bad, good, positive, negative, and so on. Clearly, wholeness is beyond all labels. So is your awareness. By not judging your thoughts, you begin to adopt the open, nonjudgmental state of being awake.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 24

Only awareness is real. Even as it plays the role of observer and observed, even as it creates worlds “out there” and “in here,” its own nature is unchanging.

Awareness exists. Everything else is a passing experience. These two sentences have been said and resaid for centuries. This fact shows, at the very least, that human beings looked at reality and found it mysterious. How did change emerge from nonchange? How did One become Many? The mystery was formulated in countless different ways. Asking “What came before time began?” as modern cosmology does, is merely a variant on the medieval question “What existed before God?”

The answer is contained in the question. What came first has been here forever. Change is just a mask worn by nonchange. Once human beings saw the mystery, we saw our own nature. We are creator and created, One and Many, changing experience and unchanging awareness. None of this has to be proved or tested. Whether you accept your true nature or not has no bearing on your true nature. It continues to be. On waking up, you see your true nature clearly, and then a new life begins.

For Today

Taking a moment or two, let your mind roam across some things you can recall from your past—memories of early childhood, your parents, birthdays, school, your first kiss, some things that are sad, and so on. It doesn’t matter what you choose to see. Now reflect on the one thing they all have in common. You were there. You are the nonchange in the midst of change. Now you know your true nature. Everything else is window dressing.
YOUR EXPERIENCE: ______________________

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DAY 25

*Human suffering is built into virtual reality.*
*It doesn’t exist in awareness itself.*

When you suffer and feel unhappy, anxious, depressed, or hopeless, your suffering feels totally real. You are experiencing something that is a given, feels like a given, rooted in physical pain and mental anguish. But virtual reality, our collective spell/dream/illusion, is a construct. Suffering is embedded in the construct, which is why it feels inevitable. Beliefs about suffering, whether they originate in the doctrine of sin or karma or modern medical theories, reinforce virtual reality.

Waking up doesn’t guarantee that there will never again be physical pain or sad days. The conditioned mind is stubborn, and our body has been bombarded constantly by signals from the conditioned mind. Shadows of conditioning continue to fall (always remembering that the shadows can be light as well as heavy). On waking up, you abandon your allegiance to the conditioned mind, and, from that moment, it begins to fade and lose its grip. You see that freedom from suffering is possible and natural. Suffering doesn’t exist in awareness itself, which is your true nature.

*For Today*

When people suffer—for example, when they feel depressed or are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness—there’s a temptation to blame themselves. “Did I do this to myself?” is a question posed out of guilt, and guilt is quick to blame. The best answer is that your suffering is part of virtual reality. You accepted virtual reality, which makes your participation in pain and suffering inevitable. Not that you are doomed; some
people escape serious suffering. But your participation is a sealed deal, no matter who you are or what happens to you, unless you make a change.

To end suffering, break the deal. When you wake up, the whole contract is annulled. Today you can prepare the way by not buying into pain and suffering as something fated and inevitable. Think back on some experiences you consider as suffering—they’d include instances of grief, loss, sickness, betrayal, failure, humiliation, and so on. Now sit quietly, go inward, and be with yourself this minute. You are the same awareness that went through suffering but also not suffering, that experienced pain but also pleasure, that lost but also gained. For every opposite, you have experienced both poles. Therefore, you are not either one.

You are the unchanging awareness that witnesses change, the screen upon which every experience plays without being an experience. This insight holds the entire secret of bringing suffering to an end.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: __________________________
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DAY 26

Suffering continues because we cling to memory and grasp at experience. It is an illusion to believe that the now can be grasped or that reality can be clung to.

Truth feels cold when there’s nothing you can do about it. People feel the truth that life brings suffering, and they hate feeling helpless in the face of this truth. The result is great inner conflict. On the one hand, we pretend to accept that life brings suffering. On the other hand, we struggle to escape the feeling of helplessness. Modern medicine ends part of the confusion and struggle. As diseases are conquered, human beings feel more powerful and suffering is pushed aside—for the moment.

Suffering in the form of mental anguish has not been alleviated, nor has the fear of disease and aging, or the dread of death. Upgrading virtual reality is the story of modern technological civilization. (Just as the discovery of new means of mechanized death is a downgrade of virtual reality.) Suffering retains its grip because we want to cling to good experiences and the memory of better days. As long as youth, health, and happiness are rooted in time, with good times being preferable to bad times, there is no escape from suffering. Clinging to virtual reality means that suffering is part of the construct.

When you wake up, you don’t try to cling or grasp. You don’t store up good memories and push down bad ones. There is only being here now. In the now there is nothing to hold and grasp, nothing to cling to. By no longer clinging, you have cut off your connection to virtual reality. Then suffering no longer clings to you.
For Today

When somebody tells you to let go and stop holding on, does that advice really help? The most stubborn resentments, affronts, hurts, and anger are holding on to you, not the other way around. No one wakes up after a bitter divorce, losing a job, or being betrayed by a friend, thinking, “Now I’ve got something I really want to hold on to.” Instead, the anger and resentment come back of their own accord, and they last as long as they decide to last, not as long as you want them to last.

What you are actually clinging to isn’t bad memories, negative emotions, old grudges, and hurt feelings. You are holding on to virtual reality. By waking up, you let go of your allegiance to it, and then the bad stuff stops clinging to you. Think about something that makes you really angry or resentful. When you have it in mind, let go. You won’t be able to, not when it is still clinging to you. In reality, you are where you are. This place is filled with bad things that once happened, hurts and resentments that are in various stages: clinging tightly, starting to let go, or almost faded to nothing. Virtual reality is set up so that, wherever you are, experience clings like barnacles to a ship’s hull. Seeing this gives you a sense of detachment, which is a sign that you are waking up.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: 

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Suffering comes to an end when we no longer fear impermanence. As long as we have a stake in the illusion, we will suffer.

Children are eager to explore the world, and they love how everything is changing. But at the same time a child wants the security and safety of home. This balance becomes harder to maintain as an adult. Change becomes threatening when there’s no one at home to promise safety and security. One way to hold anxiety at bay is to pretend that “I,” the ego-personality, is stable and reliable. “I” has a stake in the world, something to maintain. The ego builds itself up by every kind of clinging—to pleasure, fantasy, wishful thinking, outworn conditioning, old memories, and false beliefs.

All those things are impermanent, so it doesn’t work to build a self with them as a foundation. Fear of change departs only when you base your life on the true self. As you wake up, the transition from ego to true self happens naturally.

For Today

The best way to feel safe is when you take safety for granted without worrying about it. Consider the commercials you see on television for life insurance, pharmaceuticals, retirement homes, and burglar alarms. They offer reassurance by first bringing up the fear that you are not secure and safe. The tactic works because we don’t really take our personal security for granted—we push anxiety out of sight instead.

To feel how real, unshakable security feels, stop reading for a second. Then start reading again, and stop again. In the pause between reading these words, you took for granted that you know how to read. There’s no underlying anxiety about this—you know it for certain—and the same is
true for dozens of things you know how to do. This is how it feels when you are truly secure without hiding from underlying anxiety. When you wake up, you will take for granted that you have always existed and always will. On that basis, you are again like a child, free to explore the world and safe from fear because you are at home always, inside yourself.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________
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DAY 28

*Freedom is the natural state of existence,*
*knowing that we are aware here and now.*

Virtual reality isn’t reliable when it comes to lasting happiness, security, fulfillment, love, and other things we cherish. Some people enjoy very few of those things, and even when we get more than our fair share, we fear possible loss. It is a bad deal to rely on what is unreliable. You wouldn’t take a job from an employer who says that he will toss a coin every day to determine if you stay or get fired. But we cling to virtual reality with no guarantees that things will work out. This is a form of bondage—the worst form, since the widely held belief is that there’s no alternative.

Real freedom isn’t something you struggle to achieve, hope for, and feel unlikely to win. Freedom is our natural state if we don’t imprison ourselves. On waking up, you no longer feel bound to virtual reality. Mental constructs lose their grip and eventually fade away entirely. Being here now is the same as total freedom, because the now is gone before anything can lay claim to you. You exist and you are aware—that’s enough to set you free.

*For Today*

All of us have our own version of what it feels like to be free and its opposite, what it feels like to be trapped, hemmed in, and suffocated. Yet these concepts disguise the reality, which is that our sense of freedom is always bound up with its opposite. Retirement frees us from the demands of work; having the children go off to college frees us from having them under our roof. But our freedom is constrained by having a job and becoming a parent in the first place.
True freedom isn't bound up with its opposite. To prove this to yourself, think for a moment and describe what you were doing at 7:37 last Tuesday evening. What thoughts were in your head? What words did you say? Even if something memorable sticks with you from last Tuesday, it takes an effort to recall it. You are free from 7:37 last Tuesday evening because there is no attachment to it. A moment of now has fled and gone. The moment when you started to read this lesson has fled and gone. Your relationship to the now is to experience it, extract what it has to give, and move on. This is the state of nondoing and nonclinging, which dawns as your natural state when you wake up.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 29

Knowing ourselves as timeless beings, we can live consciousness. We can be what we really are—a species of consciousness creating the human universe.

“I,” the ego-personality, grapples with the stuff of creation every day, turning new ideas into reality. We call this progress, and it is—of a sort. The ideas we turn into reality have an agenda and a past. They crop up in a context that accepts or rejects them. The conditioned mind has no choice but to respond to all kinds of external limitations. Once a wish, hope, or dream manages to turn into reality, we cling to what we have created. We ignore the inevitable ruin of all things—one day the things we’ve built will be relics like the Parthenon or the Egyptian pyramids.

Creation that is lasting must be built upon the timeless. That’s not possible with physical things, and since physical objects represent ideas, even ideas cannot truly last in the face of the ravages of time. In the timeless, what lasts isn’t an idea or a thing but creativity itself. The “stuff” of creation is our own awareness and its infinite capacity to create. By waking up, you create on the basis of being a creator, not on the ideas and things that surround you. You are beyond things and ideas, a conscious being of timeless dimension.

For Today

Timeless is a concept that feels very far removed from daily life, but it comes closer when you realize what time is. Time is the process of creation and destruction. Therefore, if you don’t identify with creation and destruction, you stand in the timeless. You have a choice to shift your allegiance to the timeless whenever you want. Stop for a moment to look around the room. When you return to reading this page, every-
thing you looked at is in the process of decaying, dissolving, and fading away. But did time take away the present moment? No—it only took away the things you noticed in the present moment. The present moment constantly renews itself. It stands for the timeless that persists in the activity of time. When you are awake, the timeless takes precedence over everything else. This shift allows you to celebrate creation without feeling anxiety over things passing away.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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DAY 30

Knowing that we are free, the future of humanity can go beyond birth, death, and all the stories in between.

If you could land anywhere in history, you could seek out people who are awake. They would always be a minority, and perhaps a tiny sliver of a minority. But counting noses isn’t how waking up works. If you want to know if human beings can swim, you only need to find one example. Likewise, one awakened person tells you that waking up is possible, and, even more, that everyone is part of the process. Waking up isn’t learned; it is not acquired behavior. It is a state that all of us already exist in. The only thing that happens when you wake up is that you realize who you really are. Humanity is already free—we wouldn’t be here as conscious beings if that weren’t true. Only the stories we tell ourselves block our view of our true nature.

This interference pattern, like a fuzzy television picture, doesn’t affect reality. The broadcaster is still sending a clear picture, even if our receiver isn’t picking it up. When you wake up, the signal and the receiver are both clear and in tune with each other. Thoughts and feelings come and go without creating interference. This is what it means to be in the world but not of it.

For Today

You can be in poverty for two reasons—either you are actually poor or you are rich but don’t know it. In relation to the infinite potential that is our true nature, we feel limited in everyday life. So which is it? Are we actually limited, or do we not know that we are unlimited? The answer isn’t given by looking at conditions on the ground. The richest, smartest,
most gifted, and happiest person can wind up leading a very limited life. The answer is only available in your own awareness.

Sit for a moment and try to think of a forbidden thought. It could be something you have refused to consider for any kind of reason—it is too shameful, outrageous, antisocial, demeaning, or anything else forbidden. The instant such a thought occurs to you, it is no longer forbidden. In fact, no thought has ever been truly forbidden. You cannot limit thought, and since thoughts spring up from silent awareness, you cannot limit the possibility that any thought will be born. Because your entire life—and the life of humanity—is based on consciousness, you too are unlimited. You can stop buying into all the stories about birth, death, and everything in between. Knowing that you are unlimited means that no story can limit your possibilities.

YOUR EXPERIENCE: ________________________________
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DAY 31

You can enjoy the movie while knowing at the same time that you created the movie. That is the awakened state.

The everyday world operates by opposites. There is a positive and a negative pole to every experience. To navigate through life, people try to grasp the positive pole, but this effort never frees them from the specter that the negative will also have its day. The ultimate polarity is attachment and detachment. Spiritual seekers learn that detachment is positive, because being attached (i.e., stuck, clinging, buying into the illusion) leads to pain and suffering.

In a land where it always rains, it’s hard to stop using the word wet. In a world ruled by opposites, it’s hard to stop using a word like detachment. But in the larger picture there is neither attachment nor detachment. Each depends on the other; therefore, each leads to the other. Bad breakups show how hard it is to detach from something (or someone) you were deeply attached to. But we have to relate; that’s what the relative world is all about.

In the awakened state, things change. You know that you created the movie, so you can enjoy it without buying into it. This doesn’t mean that you detach yourself. Directors love the movies they make. But they also don’t keep reminding themselves that they created the movie as they watch it. They take for granted that they are its creator. Likewise, when you are awake you know that you created the movie you are living, but you don’t dwell on it. You are too busy being immersed in the now. Being a creator sits at the back of your awareness, and this behind-the-scenes knowledge is enough.
For Today

Right now there are things you’re attached to and things you aren’t attached to. If you are a parent with a young child, for example, you allow your child a certain amount of freedom while also stepping in when needed. This alternation between standing back and getting involved is the day-to-day business of being a parent. Yet in the back of your mind you know that you are a parent; this is your status, and you don’t need to bring it to the fore all the time.

Now consider how you parent yourself. In the same fashion, you let yourself go some of the time, while at other times you step in to monitor your behavior. It is impossible to let yourself go all the time and equally impossible to rein yourself in all the time. Yet no matter which mode you are in, in the back of your mind is your sense of self. Sit quietly for a moment and experience your sense of self. Hasn’t it always been there, through thick and thin? Your sense of self sits at the back of your mind at all times, not needing to be brought to the fore.

When you wake up, the sense of self looms large at first. You experience with astonishment that everything emerges from your sense of self—all thoughts, words, actions, the outside and inside world. Such a realization can’t dawn without bringing a sense of wonder and awe. But in time the sense of self, having realized how infinite it is, retreats once more to the back of your mind. Two people can buy popcorn at the movies, with only one of them a wealthy man. Both eat the same bag of popcorn and pay the same price for it. But the one who knows he is wealthy stores a very different set of possibilities in the back of his mind. This is what it feels like to be awake, knowing that every small action is backed up by infinite possibilities.
YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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FOR EVERY DAY

Waking up is always in the now. There is no time schedule for realizing that you are the dreamer, not the dream.

A month of awakening has passed. You've taken the journey that goes from here to here. Because there is no distance between here and here, a month was enough to complete the journey. But in another framework, no time is ever enough. Only when the timeless is your playground does “from here to here” no longer matter. The now swallows up all beginnings, middles, and endings.

Being here now was never a goal the way becoming a good person or raising your children right or earning a million dollars is a goal. You cannot compare the now with anything, because every other now is lost forever. What changes as you wake up is subtle but all-important. There is no longer a journey of any kind. Not an outward journey or an inward one. No dream to be fulfilled, no fear to escape from. The past is no longer filled with regrets or the future looming with threats. The phantom side of life has faded away, and those things were phantoms.

For Every Day

At random moments, whenever the fancy strikes you, stop and look around. Say to yourself, “A lot is going on. A lot has always been going on. I’m here, and that’s what matters.” As you wake up, these words will mean something different to you. They will expand to embrace more and more. By being here you are joining the cosmic dance. Appreciate the dance for what it is today. The cosmic part will knock on your door when you are ready.
YOUR EXPERIENCE: ____________________________

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