What follows are short excerpts (1-3 paragraphs) from three books written by Gina Lake in 2004-2006, arranged by subject. The books are *Radical Happiness: A Guide to Awakening* (published), *Return to Essence: How to Be in the Flow and Fulfill Your Life’s Purpose* (as yet unpublished), and *Choosing Love: A Guide to Spiritual Relationship* (as yet unpublished). Each paragraph could be used for contemplation. These words are intended to loosen identification with the small self and shift identification to the real you—the deeper, essential Self.

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(Note: In the three books, different words were used for the Divine: *Oneness, the Self,* and *the Source.* The Divine as it expresses itself through us is referred to as *essence.*)

**From *Radical Happiness: A Guide to Awakening* by Gina Lake**

**About life**

This world is all divine play—*lila*—as the Hindu mystics say, a way for the Oneness (the Self) to experience what it could not experience any other way. The Oneness hides from itself in this world with the intent of finding itself again. It becomes deeply immersed in illusion—the illusion of being a separate individual—so that it can explore life as these many forms, which allow it to have an enormous range of experience. The ego, this sense of separation, is not a mistake but created by the Oneness as a means for playing in and exploring this physical reality. We are the Oneness that allows the mind to spin its illusions and create the drama the Oneness is delighting in. There is no mistake here. The mind, the ego, and the illusion are all intended to make manifest the playground of life. Meanwhile, the Self participates in its creation by being aware of it all.

We are forever spinning stories about ourselves and others and about our past and future. These cause us great suffering because they are not true, or at least not the whole truth. We create an imaginary reality with these stories, and then we live in it. Meanwhile, the Self allows whatever reality the egoic self is creating. It is perfectly willing to have whatever experience we choose. It enjoys learning from it all. It is fascinated to see how the story will play out. The Self is enthralled with its creation and joyously anticipates its
every move. When we awaken and our identity shifts from the ego to the Self, we feel this joy and the love the Self has for itself in all its many forms.

About the mind

The mind dictates the supposed truth to us about who we are and how things are, and we believe it—until we don’t. The mind is an imposter dictator. It spins a false reality. Behind the mind lies Awareness of the mind, the body, and everything that exists—and that is who we are.

Just as we become engrossed in movie images and forget our surroundings, the ego becomes entranced by the movement of the mind, its thoughts, its feelings, and its desires. This becomes its world, its reality. It doesn’t notice the space, the nothingness, the emptiness between the thoughts. Following our thoughts and feelings keeps us very busy and leads to a lot of suffering. It creates the drama we call “my life.” However, life doesn’t have to go in the direction of our thoughts and feelings. That is not the life intended by the Self. It intends a different story, a simpler and potentially happier and more fulfilling one. However, the Self allows us to create these dramas and learn from them until we tire of them and begin to question the cause of our suffering.

The mind ignores so much of what is present in any moment. It only experiences its version of the moment. When we are identified with the mind, all we see is what it sees: separation; and all we experience is what it experiences: thoughts, feelings, and sensory input, which are part of the illusion it is creating and living. In a sense, there are two possible experiences of every moment: the moment as experienced by the Self and the moment as experienced by the ego. The ego’s experience of the moment is struggle, conflict, effort, dissatisfaction, restlessness, and unease. The Self’s experience of the moment is freedom, happiness, peace, contentment, and joy.

About thoughts

Thinking can be like any other activity we are present to. We can be present to our thoughts just as we are present to whatever else is part of that moment. When we are present to our thoughts, it won’t feel like we are thinking them but more like we are noticing them being thought, which is very different from the usual way of thinking.

Although thoughts may have some wisdom to them, for the most part, they are stabs at truth and tell us little about how to live in this moment. Instead, they keep us at arm’s length from the moment. They keep us living in a mentally fabricated reality—the realm of ideas—rather than in the now. They interfere with life rather than enhance it. This is contrary to our deeply held belief that thoughts are important, relevant, and meaningful. This belief is the lynchpin that, when removed, causes the whole game to fall apart; and where we land is right smack dab into Reality—into this alive, present moment.

All sorts of untrue ideas and assumptions exist in the mind, including many opposite and contradictory ones. It reasons one way on one day and another way on the next. It
concludes one thing and then it concludes the opposite. It wants one thing and then it wants something different. It is fickle because its conclusions are based on contradictory evidence and beliefs. The mind’s beliefs, ideas, and opinions are not coherent and consistent; so how can the mind’s conclusions be?

Despite its unreliability, the mind is sure of its viewpoint—and it can be very convincing. A thought arises, and often a sense of great certainty is attached to it, so we agree with it without examining it. Our thoughts can be very convincing regardless of whether they are true or not. It is like having a propaganda machine in our head, but who is spewing propaganda and why?

There is no answer to who is spewing this propaganda because there is no one “behind the curtain.” Like the wizard of Oz, the ego is not what we think it is. It has no real substance. It is nothing more than a bunch of disparate beliefs and ideas. Behind the ego, there is no one who has all the answers. It is more like a computer that has been programmed with platitudes and beliefs. Like the mechanical gypsies found at carnivals, you put your money in, and out pops an answer. You never know what will pop out, but you can be sure something will if you give it your attention (your money).

Why the egoic mind acts like a propaganda machine is simple, really: It is the mechanism that keeps the illusion going. It is programmed to make the illusion believable. It is part of the Self’s game of hide and seek. Who programmed it? The Self, of course (there is no one else), but the specific programming it contains depends on our genetics and environment. Our mind is programmed to create the particular experiences the Self intends to have through us—until we awaken from the illusion and the Self becomes embodied. After that, the programming only serves when necessary.

About the ego, the me

The ego would not exist without the mental drama it creates. It exists and thrives on thoughts about the past and plans of the future. It constantly mulls over the story of me: “How’s it going for me?” “How am I going to do?” “How did I do?” “What do I have to do to get things to go my way?” Evaluations and plans are the stuff the ego feeds on, which cause it to grow, until it looms large in our consciousness, blocking out awareness of other aspects of Reality. When we live in the egoic state of consciousness, life is about the story and how it is going and all the worries, fears, concerns, and problems entailed in that. This is the ongoing drama that the ego is engrossed in.

The ego—the me—appears to exist, although it actually only exists as a thought. It appears the ego is having thoughts, but the ego itself is a thought. This is another of the great illusions, which keeps us enmeshed in the egoic state of consciousness. The ego seems very real, and yet it has no substance. If you look very closely, you see that it is composed of thoughts about me and nothing more.

Absorption with the me is behind much of our suffering because the me is not only a very small part of the truth, it doesn’t even exist. This constant self-reflection seems valuable
when we are engaged in it. We think it is improving us or our lives, but instead, it takes us away from life.

When we forget for a moment about the me, we still exist as consciousness. This consciousness is moving the body and aware of everything there is to be aware of. The me doesn’t need to be in the picture at all for life to be happening. The experience of no me is quite surprising when we first begin experiencing it for longer periods of time, but really, this is the most natural state.

**About suffering**

The belief that things should be other than the way they are right now is the belief most responsible for the suffering on this planet. It is a lie. Things can never be different than the way they are right now because it is already too late. Life has moved on to the next moment, and that moment cannot be different from what it is either. Life is just happening, and the mind is saying no to it all. It argues with reality at every turn, but this doesn’t change a thing. It only makes for a lot of unhappiness.

The way out of this suffering is to notice that this is going on. Notice how often the mind says no to what is in this moment. Notice how it brings its view of good and bad to every moment and instantly decides it should be different than it is. We allow this to continue because we unconsciously believe that this is a good strategy for life.

The ego is at battle with life, and attacking each moment makes it feel safe, as if it can ward off trouble by declaring what is wrong. The truth is that nothing is ever wrong with what is. The mind just arbitrarily defines whatever is as wrong. It makes the moment its enemy and then prepares a strategy for fighting it. This is how it creates the drama we call life.

**About feelings**

We can learn a lot from our feelings about the role our beliefs play in our suffering. Our feelings call attention to our mistaken beliefs and make it possible to become free of them if we are willing to look in that direction. Usually, we don’t. We are not used to thinking of our thinking as the problem but rather something else that needs to be changed so that we can feel better. Instead of looking for the mistaken belief behind the feeling and either changing or ignoring it, we try to change reality to fit our beliefs—and that is a prescription for suffering.

**About happiness**

If you just notice, you will see that happiness is already here. Still, no matter how good life may be, the ego says no to it: “It would be better if…” “I will be happy when…” As long as we don’t follow these thoughts, we will be happy. But usually we give our attention to the ego’s rejection of what is rather than to what is. We give this “no” the
power to steer our actions: We jump from one idea to the next, trying to make life and ourselves better.

We will never attain happiness by listening to the “no.” Happiness just is. It is inherent in the moment—in the now—in the form of joy, acceptance, and love. It cannot not be. We only have to notice what already is. That is the only reality there is, so why waste your attention on what is not?

We think that some day there will be no more “no”—no more ego arguing against reality—and then we will finally be happy. But that day will never come. If you wait for the “no” to disappear, you will be waiting a very long time.

We don’t have to get rid of the “no” to be happy; we just have to see it for what it is—the programmed discontent of the ego—and ignore it. The ego will never be happy, but we can be if we don’t give our attention to what the mind says we need to be happy. The ego doesn’t know about happiness. What can it know about happiness? Its job is to manufacture unhappiness, and it is very skillful at convincing us otherwise.

**About acceptance**

Saying yes to what is doesn’t mean we have to like what is. We only have to be willing to let it be the way it is. This is a lot easier to do when we see the whole truth about something and not just part of it, as the ego does. The whole truth is that every experience has both positives and negatives and that whatever is, is constantly changing. Whatever we don’t like in this moment will not exist in another. No two moments are ever the same. Even how we feel about what is changes. Feelings are another part of what is that we don’t have to like; we just have to allow. Saying yes to what is just means allowing it to be the way it is.

We could call this acceptance instead of allowing, but “acceptance” seems to imply resignation. In this case, however, “acceptance” really just means telling the truth about what is. And the truth is that what is just is. That is all we have to accept. We accept that it is. We can’t change the fact that we might prefer something to be other than it is, and we don’t have to. Preferences are the way they are. A preference for something to be other than it is, is just one of the things to be accepted, allowed.

**About the Self**

There is nothing closer to us than the Self. It is not something we have to go searching for. We have always been alive as the Self, but it is very quiet and overlooked much of the time because the mind is so noisy. Because our senses keep us focused on things instead of experience, we often miss the experience of this moment, which is where the Self can be felt. Who we are is not a thing but a Be-ing—we are the experience of awareness, aliveness, joy, love, wisdom, and happiness. And that is what the experience of every moment holds.
Because the entire world is the Self, a full experience of any aspect of it will bring us into the now and into the experience of the Self. The Self delights in experiencing itself. That is one reason it has created the physical world. Through it, it is experiencing itself in various forms. We make it possible for the Self to explore and experience the physical world. We are like sense organs that allow the Self to experience itself through creation.

**About awakening**

The hardest thing about waking up is staying committed to the Truth. We have to want the Truth more than we want to be someone. Until we fully commit ourselves to the Truth, the ego will remain in charge. The ego has every reason to resist our awakening, but the suffering of ego-identification ultimately wakes us up. The ego is both the problem and the solution. Given this, we can’t help but wake up—eventually.

Many want to wake up, but they don’t want to pay the price. It seems very dear: the me and its story. But how hard is it, really, to give up something that doesn’t even exist? If you didn’t have a Lexus, would it be hard to give it up? Of course not. But if you believed you had a Lexus, then it would be. All we need to do is stop believing in something that doesn’t exist. Nothing else changes, really, just the belief that you exist, that you matter. The truth stays the same: You never existed in the first place. It was all an illusion.

This truth can be hard to swallow. It means giving up not only our ideas about ourselves but our ideas period: all of our opinions, beliefs, judgments, hopes, dreams, and our ideas about the past and future. These are the only things that make us who we think we are. Nothing else. These are all that have ever differentiated us from others, us from the Self. This may seem like a high price, but what are they really? They are just ideas.

The mind is the great generator of identity. It thinks the egoic self into reality. We can just as easily make this egoic self disappear by not thinking. When we stop thinking, our story about me disappears. This is proof that the me is a fabrication of the mind. When we stop thinking, or even just stop paying attention to our thoughts, the me disappears. In its place is the truth of who we are—the Self—which cannot be put into words.

**About who you are**

When we are identified with the mind, we believe that we are who we think we are: our self-image and the labels we have for ourselves. But is that who you are? If that is who you are, then who is it that is able to think about this question? What is it that is aware of the ideas that make up the self-image? What is it that is aware of the coming and going of thoughts?

This idea me may seem to reside in the body or the mind or both, but what is it that is aware of the body and the mind? Could that be who you are, and the body and the mind are just functioning within that awareness? In that case, would you be limited to just the body and mind, or could you actually be anything you are aware of right now? Could all
of it be you? What if that were true? What would that mean? Life would be lived from a very different place.

These questions can wake us up out of the egoic state of consciousness. Questioning the assumptions of the mind is a very powerful tool for awakening. Becoming aware of the mind, its thoughts, and the truth or falseness of them can help us bust through the web of illusion cast by the mind and the ego, which fools us into thinking that we are separate when we are not.

The peace, happiness, and joy we have been searching for, competing for, have been here all along in the space between our thoughts. We are this peace, happiness, and joy. We missed it because it is who we are. It is too close for us to see, like an eye that cannot see itself. It is so ever-present that, like water to a fish, it is taken for granted and not questioned. Like the air we breathe, it is invisible and without dimension, and the egoic mind doesn't pay attention to such things. It has eyes only for the tangibles in life.
About life and the Source

You were meant for this life you are having, not some other life, not someone else’s life. The egoic mind doesn’t understand this. It wants all the goodies, without realizing that what it might consider bad is a goodie too. It is all good, and you are here to experience it. Experiencing is the reason you are here. However, you are not here for just any experience but for the ones you are having because you are the only one in this entire universe destined for these experiences. They are designed just for you. You are co-creating them with the Source, which is loving it all.

The moment—the now—is like a river, which carries you forward, ever-changing and ever moving. You either flow with this now or reject it and fight it, but that doesn’t stop the flow; it only determines your experience of it. When you glide along with the flow, the experience is joyous, as you are able to experience the Source’s joy in the moment it has created. When you fight the flow, you experience tension, anger, and dis-ease.

Loving the flow is not dependent on liking it. It is much easier to love the flow when you realize that it is okay to prefer that something else be happening. Loving the flow only requires that you jump into that moment—whatever is happening—and experience it fully, whether you like it or not. The Source loves experience, and that is all you need to learn to love if you want to be happy.

This you that you think of yourself as coexists with essence—the divine in you—and usually overshadows it so that you come to think of yourself only as this you. However, the Source, as essence, is never apart from you. It breathes you and moves you, although its subtle presence is not very apparent. Its expression in your life often goes unnoticed.

If it were not for points of consciousness like you, the Source would not have a way of experiencing the flow. You are both a creation of the Source with its own individual destiny and a means the Source has devised to experience everything it has created. It not only designed you to experience the flow but to interact with the flow and co-create with itself.

About who you are

Who you are—essence—is not a thing but an ever-changing and ever-evolving experiencing. When you look for who you are, you will never find someone or something who is having an experience; you will only find experience, awareness, consciousness. You are awareness of experiencing, but you will never find someone or something that is aware. This experiencing or awareness or consciousness is so ever-present and subtle, and you are so immersed in it that you don’t notice it. It seems like the I is experiencing,
aware, conscious, but this is a false conclusion. You are programmed to feel that there is an experiencer that you call I. However, when you look, you see that the I only exists as an idea. It is not experiencing, aware, or conscious.

You are not what you think you are. Stop thinking and find out who you really are. When you stop thinking, the stories and feelings and the activity driven by them stop. What a relief to find out there never was a problem. Then you can discover what is arising out of the flow—what is true to do now, in this moment. That is all you need to know—what is true in this moment. The other moments will take care of themselves. What about this one? What does it want? What is it about? Pay attention to now, and the rest will take care of itself.

**About suffering**

Suffering could be defined as the opposition of the ego to whatever is. This opposition creates an underlying discontent with life, which makes it difficult to experience the joy and happiness that are available in every moment.

**About the egoic mind (the ego-driven mind) and thought**

Most people don’t question their thoughts, and many are not even aware of them. Their relationship to them is: “This is what I think.” They express these thoughts and act on them, and this becomes their life and who they are. The opinions, beliefs, ideas, perspectives, memories, dreams, and desires (which are also thoughts) of the I is who they seem to be—not only to themselves but to others, who are equally involved in their I. Until you interrupt identification with your thoughts by distancing yourself from them, you will find them interesting and compelling, and you will assume they are true and useful guides for your behavior. You are programmed to believe this about your thoughts.

Since you see yourself as the one who is thinking, you assume your thoughts are what you think, so you do what you think. The egoic mind tells you to do something (because it is consistent with your conditioning and identity), and you do it. You don’t even think to question it because you are programmed not to: That is what you think. End of story. In the egoic state of consciousness, the answer is whatever you think it is, and if someone disagrees, you argue your position because it’s what you think. You are identified with your thoughts in a way that causes you to believe them.

Your mind has been programmed with your particular conditioning. The thoughts that come up in your mind are designed to be there. They are the grist for your mill. Your conditioning is what causes you to suffer, grow, seek understanding, and evolve. You have been given this conditioning to learn from it and overcome it. It brings you situations and difficulties that have the potential for teaching you so much, although what you learn or whether you learn from them at all is up to you. This programming is not a mistake. It provides experiences that lead to growth. Nevertheless, it is possible to have more pleasant and fulfilling experiences through this body/mind by being less identified with this programming and more identified with essence.
Watch the mind as it tries, in every moment, to co-opt experience by translating it into a story. It tries to draw you away from experience into a mental world that simulates experience. It tries to draw you into an imagined story about the experience. If it succeeds, that story becomes your experience. If you agree to go to this mental world, feelings will also arise and add reality to this world, but it is still a mental world. Once you act on these thoughts and feelings, you create new experiences. In this way, the ego does manage to shape your life, and this will go on as long as you allow it. Most people’s lives are shaped nearly entirely by the ego. Essence allows this because it enjoys the growth that results, but this way of living is full of suffering. Essence offers other possibilities for your life, which you may miss if you are not in the flow.

Seeing the strength of the I and not strengthening it by not identifying with it or giving it a voice is a very powerful spiritual practice. And it does take practice before dis-identification from the ego is more your usual state than identification. You have to see that story spun by the egoic mind again and again before you begin to see yourself as that which is aware of the story, rather than the storyteller.

Not only does the egoic mind keep you out of the peace and contentment of the present moment with its thoughts, these thoughts often create negative feelings, pressure, and stress. The egoic mind tells you when to do it, how to do it, and what you are doing wrong. It is always reminding you of time and hurrying you up. It can be extremely bossy, unkind, and unforgiving. The worst atrocities on this planet have been carried out by those dominated by a very negative, tyrannical egoic mind. While even pleasant thoughts can take you out of the beauty of the moment, negative thoughts make being out of the moment especially painful.

Decisions always come from the mind. A decision is the result of making up your mind (an interesting turn of phrase). To the egoic mind, questions feel like problems that need to be solved by making a decision. There is a feeling of needing to make a decision, and almost any decision will do. To the egoic mind, making a decision is important because that ends the discomfort of not knowing. You make up your mind. You make it up!

**About essence**

Something else is co-creating your life along with the egoic mind. It allows the egoic mind to have the influence it does, but all along it is offering other choices, other possibilities, than what the mind is offering. You are free to follow what you think or to follow these other possibilities. They are not immediately obvious, however, because they are not usually introduced through the mind but arise in the moment.

The best way to describe the experience of essence choosing is to say that it just happens. It doesn’t feel much like a choice, which involves thinking and implies deciding between options. Essence chooses when you are not thinking. It chooses in between your thoughts. The choice pops into your mind or is expressed spontaneously through action, but you didn’t arrive at it through thinking.
To discover what essence is choosing for the you that you think you are, you will have to be quiet and listen. This will bring you into the moment and into the flow, where the choosing is happening and has been happening all along. What essence chooses adapts to what you end up creating from the egoic level. It chooses alongside the ego and tries to carry out its plan and goals for this lifetime. The more time you spend in the flow, however, the more your actions and choices reflect the intentions of essence.

Essence will create quite a different life than the ego, although many things will be similar. Essence will express the same talents the ego did, but it will do it more skillfully, fluidly, and powerfully. Essence will express itself through the same personality the ego did, but it will do it more positively, without selfishness. Essence will still be faced with the challenges and karma of your particular body/mind, but it will handle them more gracefully and turn them into strengths.

When your words come from essence, they seem to pop out of your mouth. You didn’t think about saying them beforehand, and you didn’t know you were going to say them. They may come as a surprise, but a pleasant one. Because they don’t feel like they came from you, you don’t feel like you can take credit for them. They feel like they came through you, which is the truth.

The egoic mind vs. the flow

When you are engaged in an activity in the egoic state of consciousness, you are usually thinking about something else. If this were not the case, you would drop into the flow (become aligned with essence), and you might not even decide to do that activity. If you really allowed yourself to experience the activity you were engaged in, you would either find yourself enjoying it or, from the place of essence, you would choose differently. Either is a much better outcome than not being present to what you are doing and not enjoying it.

When you are present to what you are doing, you are rewarded by a quiet mind, or at least a mind that remains in the background. This is a great relief. You don’t have to listen to the negativity, complaints, arguments, confusion, fear, worries, and old worn-out stories of the egoic mind. If they are there, they seem more like a bad radio station in the background rather than about you. They don’t seem personal. Being present to what you are doing quiets the mind, and that is its own reward. Relief from the egoic mind and immersion in essence can turn an activity that you think is unpleasant into a very pleasant one.

The way you find the flow and become aligned with essence is by allowing. What you allow is whatever is happening. It is happening, so just allow it to be the way it already is. Besides, what is the alternative if that is what is happening? The egoic mind offers other alternatives: denying, arguing with, or ignoring the flow. This is what creates suffering rather than what is actually happening, although you will never convince the mind of that. The egoic mind takes the fun out of life. It is the spoiler of every experience. It is a
whiner, complainer, judge, critic, know-it-all, and tyrant. It is jealous, envious, and spiteful. It is just plain mean, and that just isn’t fun to be with, for you or anyone else.

The difference between the egoic mind and the flow (being aligned with essence) is that the flow is flexible and takes into account the freshness and newness of each moment and adjusts activity accordingly. The ego, on the other hand, demands that you do something at a certain time and in a certain way, which may actually go against the flow. No wonder you feel resistance when you listen to the egoic mind: Not only is the ego’s nature to resist, but what it says is often in conflict with essence. In that case, resisting is good if what you are resisting is the ego. By all means resist unkindness, resist judgment, resist hatred, resist selfishness, resist false beliefs, resist the path of least resistance. Choosing to resist the ego’s selfishness and bullying tactics will bring you into the flow.

The ego doesn’t perceive that anything worthwhile is coming out of the flow. It discounts or disregards many of the insights, solutions, and urges to act that arise from essence. It assumes that it is the only player here, and it convinces you of this too. It even seems this way because the flow’s timing is not what the ego would like. The flow has its own timing, which is not revealed before it happens. The ego assumes it needs to take control of life because it often seems like nothing is happening, and it is very unhappy with that. Almost anything seems better than that.

When you are in the flow, you experience whatever you are experiencing without telling a story about it. Thoughts may arise, but you recognize them as thoughts, as an attempt on the part of the ego to define the moment because that is what it tries to do. Meanwhile, you just stay in the experience of the moment, which is forever morphing into something else. When you are in the flow, you know yourself as that which is aware of the thoughts, not someone who is thinking them.

When you are in the flow, life feels good and easy. You are not struggling against the moment, just flowing with it, without questioning it or evaluating it. The mind interrupts experience with thoughts about experience. It brings you into its world, which is a world of doubt, worry, fear, separation, judgment, and confusion. When you are experiencing these, you are identified with the ego, not essence. They point to the need to make another choice. It is up to you to choose to be in the flow, to align with essence instead of the ego.

The egoic mind often interferes with the flow by telling you that you need to make a choice, when that is not what is arising from the flow. If you listen to this, it throws you out of the flow, and you are off and running on some different track.

Every moment presents an opportunity to be in the flow if you pay attention to it. Attention is the key to being in the flow. Whatever you give your attention to, is what you identify with. If you give your attention to the products of the egoic mind—thoughts, feelings, or desires—you will become identified with the egoic mind. If you give your attention to the experience of the moment—to everything that is arising in the moment from the position of Awareness—you will be identified with essence.
About the direction of the flow

The flow is essence unfolding in the moment. The flow contains whatever is present in the moment, and what it contains is always changing. It moves towards some things and away from others. It includes some things and excludes others. It is always changing, but it changes for a reason. The flow has directionality. It moves in a certain direction because it is directed to either by essence or by free will. How it changes is not solely up to essence but also up to free will, which in most cases equals the ego’s will. Thus, the ego’s will is part of the flow, and for many it is the main determinant of the flow’s direction because essence allows the ego’s will to shape the flow. Essence is interested in seeing what will be created, and it values the lessons that result from the ego’s choices. Nevertheless, the flow is ultimately under the control of essence; it just doesn’t always choose to exercise that control. It often just allows you to create whatever you choose. Usually, however, what happens in any one moment is more of a co-creation between your ego and other egos and essence.

There are ways to discover where the flow is going, at least momentarily. Within every moment are clues about the direction of the flow. What is arising now? Is the phone ringing? If so, the flow is going there. Is there an urge to sit down at your computer and write a friend? If so, the flow is going there. Is conditioning arising? That is the flow too. Whatever is spontaneously arising in the moment is the flow. There are no mistakes: If it is arising, it is part of the flow.

Each moment has the seeds for the next, but you don’t know how they will sprout or even if they will. Even when you are very present to the moment, you still can’t really know what will happen. All you know is what is happening. Still, you can notice the seeds that are present. Each represents a potential direction for the flow.

The flow has a way of communicating its direction to you, but you have to listen and be willing to follow its nudges, which usually come in the form of intuition and urges to act. It rarely speaks in words, except through other people, so you need to be in a receptive state to catch its communication. However, that is impossible if you are thinking. Thinking blocks the channel of communication between you and essence because you can’t think and listen at the same time. When that happens, essence has to find another way to communicate with you, perhaps through someone else, who hopefully is listening and willing to respond.

About the life plan and life’s purpose

The life plan is broad and not specified before you are born. There are many ways it can be fulfilled, and you get to choose how you will do that. However, there are more or less optimal ways that plan can be fulfilled. Being in touch with essence will lead you to fulfill your plan in a way that will bring the greatest satisfaction and happiness.
By following your intuition in each moment, the life you were meant to live is revealed. Intuition is the alternative to the egoic mind. When you stop listening to the mind, what is left is your intuition, which arises in between the thoughts. Catch it there because not only will it take you back to essence but to your greatest fulfillment—your life’s purpose.

In every moment, essence has an intention for a particular direction. It is willing to have you choose differently, but it makes its intentions known in subtle ways, primarily through your intuition and spontaneous urges and by providing you with information from various places. Even those entrenched in the egoic state of consciousness are able to pick up on these clues if they choose because they are usually very obvious or numerous.

When you are out of the flow, you get things done, but they don’t bring much satisfaction or joy, both because you are not present to them and because they are not intrinsically satisfying. If what you are doing doesn’t fit your plan, it won’t satisfy you even if it would satisfy someone else. You cannot be fulfilled by someone else’s life purpose; you can only be fulfilled by yours. You won’t find out what that is by listening to the mind because it doesn’t know. Only by paying attention to what is coming out of the flow and letting that lead you through your life will you fulfill your life’s purpose. The mind will lead you if you let it, but don’t.

So much time and energy is spent pursuing goals that are irrelevant to the life’s purpose and the intentions of essence. These pursuits have some value as learning tools, but they often take you away from more fulfilling pursuits and may even make finding more fulfilling pursuits more difficult. In taking you in a direction different from where essence would have taken you, these choices often lead to difficulties and pain, not only because they are not fulfilling but because essence may use difficulties to steer you back to its plan.
About who you really are and who others really are

The difficulty in knowing the other is misunderstanding who he or she is. We take others at their word: They tell us what they do and what they like and don’t like, and we think we know them. We think that is who they are.

So we need to get back to basics, back to the essential Self—essence—that which is behind the mask of who someone says he or she is and who we say we are. What is behind the mask is the same from one person to the next because there is only one Being here! That is the most basic truth of life: One Being is creating all of this—all of these different expressions of life. There is only one Being here, and not only are you it but everyone and everything you see is it. Let this sink in a moment. What would your life be like if you really took in this truth and knew it in your bones? What if you knew that the other was your very self and, moreover, that the other was the divine Self?

This truth is very difficult to see because we are programmed to see ourselves and others as separate entities. We operate through a body/mind that is programmed to experience differences as a potential threat. The egoic mind—the aspect of us that appears to be running the show and using our mind to do it—is deeply conditioned to react to differences as alien to itself and therefore potentially dangerous. It views others as a threat to its survival and yet it needs others to survive.

Fortunately, you are not your ego or mind. You are only programmed to think that you are. Once you see this, you can begin to experience your true Self—essence—and live your life and carry on your relationships from there. From essence, true love is entirely possible, but not from the ego. What does the ego know about love? It knows only about protecting its interests, and there is no room for that in true love.

About the Divine’s love of diversity

Only from Oneness—from essence—are we able to let there be two different people here because Oneness likes two-ness. After all, it created it for its enjoyment and evolution. Oneness takes joy in two-ness because two-ness is interesting and unpredictable (unlike Oneness), and unpredictability is fun and a challenge.

Some of our most valuable relationships are with those who are different from us because they often bring in new perspectives and information, and challenge us in needed ways. Differences are stimulating and catalytic. We may not initially like those who seem different from us, and we may not like what they stir up in us, but that is no measure of their value to us or of how we may feel about them once we have come to know them.

About a spiritual and meaningful relationship
Essence has a purpose for living this life in this costume. It is unfolding its plan through you and through this personality and body/mind. It has goals for this life, and fulfilling them will bring meaning to your life. A particular relationship either supports these goals or not. If a relationship is compatible on the personality level but not supportive of these goals, it will not be fulfilling and probably will not last, no matter how attractive or wonderful you think each other is.

Because we want love on our terms, many of us don’t find it, or what we get is a person and relationship that matches our conditioning as much as possible. This kind of relationship is not necessarily the one that will make us the happiest, oddly enough. The ego thinks it knows best about relationships and will settle for nothing less than what it wants, but what it wants is just not a good guide for happiness. This is a profound and not-so-obvious truth: What we want is not always what will make us the happiest. Following our desires is not the key to happiness. It is what we think will make us happy, but it isn’t what actually makes us happy. Happiness lies in being aligned with essence.

Spiritual compatibility is much more important to success and happiness in relationships than compatible personalities. This includes not only a similar level of consciousness and soul age, but compatible, similar, or related life purposes. When we meet someone who is destined to be part of what we came here to accomplish, this creates a much more powerful connection than personality compatibility or even soul age. Nevertheless, we often choose a personality (before coming into life) that will be compatible with those who are important to our life’s purpose because there is some value in this.

Essence wants harmony but not at the expense of growth. You might find it easier to love someone who is like you and with whom you have a lot in common, but that doesn’t mean your relationship will be fulfilling on a spiritual level.

When you are happy just being, then you don’t need your partner to be anything for you. You don’t need anything. Then, it is possible to have a truly loving relationship, one based on celebrating the truth—the ultimate reality of who you are.

**About essence**

This real you has no problem with anything in existence. It is responsible for creating all of it, and it doesn’t perceive anything it created as a problem. It purposefully created the diversity and differences that so bother the ego. And it created the ego to be the way it is, so that is not a problem either. Once you wake up out of the egoic trance, which mystics call “the dream” or “the illusion,” you are aware of yourself as Awareness, as essence. From this place, all is well and unfolding perfectly—perhaps chaotically and unpredictably from our standpoint, but perfectly nonetheless.

Essence doesn’t seek to change life, but it does guide it through intention, and that is very different from trying to change what is happening in the moment, which is what the ego is all about. Life unfolds according to an overall plan, which adjusts and adapts to our choices. Every moment is different from the last and from the next—that is what is
perfect about it. There is no judgment from essence about each moment, only acceptance. Essence shapes the moment, but it doesn’t try to change it as it is. It rejoices in shaping it and in the result of that shaping, Essence creates life, which is an ongoing process, but it doesn’t argue or lament in what results, as the ego does. It continues to shape it and enjoys this process of creation as it does this.

**About conditioning in relationships**

We expect our true love to line up with our conditioning, but maybe our conditioning—what we like and dislike—is not a good guide for finding true love. What if our conditioning interferes with it instead? It may well be that we have conditioning that prevents us from finding a relationship that would be very satisfying. We are so busy going after what we like and don’t like that we don’t consider that our likes and dislikes could actually be keeping us from love.

We mistake our conditioning for who we are, so naturally we fight over it because it feels like we are fighting for our life. Giving up our conditioning feels like we are giving up ourselves. We are afraid that if we give up these ideas, we won’t be who we are. Then who would we be? The ego feels confused and frightened about this possibility. It feels like it won’t exist, and that is true: Without ideas, the ego does not exist, but you do still exist.

Another reason it is difficult to ignore our conditioning is that we believe it: When we think something, because it is our thought, we believe it is right. We think our conditioning is the right conditioning and that others should be like us. Even if we aren’t under the illusion that they should be like us, we still wish they would be and try to win them over to our way of seeing or doing things.

In the Heart is where the Divine can speak to you, and it always argues for unity over separation and for love over being right. It is willing to allow the other to be as he or she is out of love, and it is willing to accept responsibility for its own conditioning. From this place, it is easy to see that you have a choice to follow your conditioning or not and to impose this conditioning on others or not. From this place, your conditioning is not that compelling. You see it for what it is—just ideas, and not necessarily good ones. From this place, you can see the truth about your conditioning, and it becomes much easier to choose to ignore it or at least not impose it on your partner.

When you are identified with the ego, it is very difficult to make these choices. Conditioning feels very real and meaningful and very compelling. The conditioning is reinforced by the feeling that it is right, which creates more feelings, such as resentment and anger. This makes the conditioning feel even more real, important, and compelling. Because we don’t want to feel all of these feelings, we try to change the situation by trying to change our partner.

Notice when you and your partner are involved in arguing over whose conditioning is right. If you don’t stop this, two results are possible: One of you wins at the other’s
expense or no one wins. Either result is damaging to the relationship because you have had to come up with judgments and criticisms to support your point of view, and these undermine love and trust. In building a case against your partner, you create a negative image of him or her, which you carry around with you and relate to. That negative image gets reinforced over time whenever the partner does something that seems to support it. It gains strength over time, and you begin to relate more to these images than to what your partner is actually doing in the moment. This is what causes relationships to deteriorate over time.

**About the ego and relationships**

The ego feels that it must do something about these differences. It points them out, judges them, argues with them, attacks them, and tries to change them. Differences make the ego feel superior, inferior, defensive, frightened, or angry—not loving, kind, compassionate, or even curious. For the ego, differences stir up inner and outer conflict and plenty of feelings. This is the ego’s experience of relationships. For the ego, relationships are difficult and stressful, and others are never quite right.

Differences are not inherently problematic in relationships. The ego makes differences a problem by taking the position that its conditioning (which is behind all differences) is right and by imposing this conditioning on someone else. Differences are not a problem until the ego tries to impose its conditioning on others.

Because the ego needs relationships (and therefore love) to survive, it is open to love in the context of relationships more than in any other context. Without a need for love, the ego could stay comfortably separate from others. It would not have to reach out to others or act any differently than it does. But because it needs love, it must learn to love—and that ultimately leads to its demise. The ego and love cannot inhabit the same space. One must go.

The ego assumes that its ideas are the right ones—even its fantasies—and that it has the right to suggest that everyone else conform to them. Everyone has an equally self-centered and arrogant ego.

**About love and relationships**

Love in its most basic form is allowing.

Love is what breaks the spell of the egoic state of consciousness and releases us from the prison of separation. It is love from others—from relationship—that ultimately frees us.

Love is the recognition of the divine Self in another. It is the ability to see beyond (or behind) the egoic mask to the real Self, which is exquisitely lovable and which evokes love in others. All of the qualities that you love in another are qualities of the Self, of essence: compassion, understanding, wisdom, kindness, love, patience, and inner strength.
These are not qualities of the ego, which is innately self-centered and focused on its needs. Where is the wisdom, compassion, and love in that? Is it any wonder that when we are identified with the ego, we don’t feel very loveable? The ego is not very lovable, but essence is, and from essence, even the ego is lovable.

The ego doesn’t know how to love, but the divine in you—essence—does. Essence loves. It is also wise, understanding, kind, compassionate, sensitive, patient, and caring. Anything that you would want a lover or another human being to be comes from essence, not from the ego.

We learn to love by being loved, which makes us feel safe and secure enough to open our heart to another. Anything less keeps the ego on guard and defensive. Love disarms the ego like nothing else. It breaks through the egoic state of consciousness and evokes love in us, which brings us into alignment with essence, where we can more easily express the qualities of essence: love, peace, joy, serenity, kindness, compassion, patience, and fortitude, to name a few. That is why love is the greatest gift you can give another. It is the gift that allows others to relax and return to essence and the true happiness and peace that is our birthright. Even loving acts and words that only mimic essence can do this. Love is that powerful that even a little bit is potent enough to change our consciousness.

Love is not about needs but about seeing beyond your conditioned needs and desires to the essence of the person and sharing at that level. Essence is capable of standing on its own, without someone fulfilling its needs. Its purpose in relationships is to experience Oneness with another—to experience love. It has no other purpose. It is not trying to get anything from the other. It is just happy to be with the other and celebrate that beingness together.

**About choosing love in relationships**

We tend to think of love as an uncontrollable feeling that comes over us, which does happen, but real love and love that is sustained is always a choice: You choose to be open to someone—you choose to accept them—and that allows love to flow. This process is often unconscious, so you don’t realize you are choosing to accept someone when it is happening, but that is what precedes love. It happens unconsciously all the time, and it can happen consciously too. When acceptance and love happen unconsciously, it is often because someone fits our ideas, desires, and conditioning. When this doesn’t happen automatically and unconsciously, we can simply choose to accept someone because he or she is different or unusual in some way.

**About relationships**

As long as you believe that you are your self image and that others are their self image or your image of them, you will find it difficult to have relationships. From the level of ego, relationships boil down to a struggle to change others and get your needs met. For the
ego, relationships, like everything else, are all about me and what’s in it for me. What happens when you have two people trying to have a relationship with this as the basis? No one is happy. No one gets what they want because getting what you want misses the point.

It is possible to have a real relationship with someone—a relationship between what is Real in someone and Real in another. This is the ideal in relationship—not finding an ideal partner who will meet your every need but being the ideal partner by being the expression of loving kindness that you always wanted and that you have always been. You do this by being aligned with essence, your true self.

**About the personality and relationships**

We are told to look beyond appearances, but even then, we often just see the personality. How people behave and react—their personality—is still part of the costume. The personality has no more depth or significance in terms of who they are than their physical appearance. We think we are being less superficial by loving people for their personality rather than their appearance, but the personality is just more programming. People have no more control over it than they do over their appearance.

**About judgment and relationships**

Judgment is the easiest thing to do because it is the most natural thing for the ego. It is also easy because judgment is based on differences, and differences are everywhere. Life doesn’t duplicate itself, so everything and everyone is an opportunity for judgment. Differences are an opportunity for the ego to define itself as superior in some way. These definitions are taken by the ego as the way things are. It pulls out a rule (conditioning) it has stored away and applies it to someone or something as a means of declaring it inferior: “Hats shouldn’t be worn in restaurants. How crass he is to leave his hat on!”

Judgment undermines relationship little by little or more quickly, but the result is the same—the demise of the relationship. A little bit of ongoing judgment is just as bad as a lot of it because, over time, it is enough to kill a relationship. Judgment is more pernicious than we would like to think. It seems rather innocuous in minor doses or over small matters, but like poison, a little is enough to kill.

Your judgments are not about others. They are about you and your conditioning. No one has “the right” conditioning. We all have our own, and no one has exactly the same conditioning, which helps explain why getting along is so challenging. To make things worse, we all think our conditioning is the right conditioning, or at least better than someone else’s, or we wouldn’t judge others and try to change them. This is our stance because we are programmed to have this stance. We think this way because this thought is part of our conditioning, but the kind of conditioning that everyone has.

**About anger and relationships**
When you feel angry, it is an opportunity to discover something about your conditioning—not a sign that your partner needs to change.

**About changing your partner**

The ego’s position is that it is your job to change and improve your partner. Let’s be clear that it is not your job to change or improve your partner. Etch this in stone somewhere, put it on your mantel, or pin this up on your refrigerator. Let this sink into the depths of your being because it is that important. The ego wants you to change and improve your partner, not essence. Life, through essence, will change your partner when and how your partner needs to be changed, and unless you are acting as a mouthpiece for essence, you have no business trying to change your partner. Any attempt to do this can be assumed to be your ego because when essence does express itself through you, it does so spontaneously and with love and acceptance—not judgment.

Not only is it not your business to change others, but it is harmful to relationships to try to do this. Ideas are just not worth the price paid in love lost. Love is more important than any conditioned idea or belief, but if you take your conditioning more seriously than love, you will lose love. The other will withhold love from you because it will be too painful for him or her to love you.

It is not your partner’s responsibility to change just because you have conditioning that demands that. Your wanting your partner to change is not enough reason for him or her to change, although the ego thinks it is and tries to manipulate by claiming “If you loved me, you would change.” If you want a loving relationship, you have to take responsibility for your conditioning and the feelings generated by it and choose to give up your judgments and attempts to change your partner. When you do this, you will discover what true love is because your partner will love you for being so loving, accepting, and allowing. There is nothing that opens someone’s heart more than someone with an open heart.

Nothing is ever lost in choosing love. Your judgments never worked anyway. They only created anger, hurt, and separation. When you see the truth of this, it becomes much easier to choose love over judgment.

**About falling in love**

This feeling of attraction or repulsion is not love. Attraction or repulsion is just tied to a feeling of love or a lack of this feeling. It is a conditioned response, not real love. The feeling of love (attraction) is masquerading as real love. This is why you can fall in love with someone you don’t even know: Falling in love is a feeling of attraction that gets triggered by something in the partner. It is a conditioned response.

**About sex**
We believe that fulfillment is possible through sex. This is a deeply conditioned misunderstanding. Sex cannot fulfill you anymore than Twinkies can. Sex is a pleasurable experience. We give it far too much weight and importance. We think that good sex will fulfill us and make us happy and make our relationship wonderful. Sex doesn’t have that much power. It doesn’t have the power to make us happy anymore than a car or a million dollars or beauty or food or any other pleasure. It is a passing pleasure. Our conditioning around relationships makes sex seem to be the key to happiness in relationships, and it is not.

The only fulfillment sex is capable of is momentary fulfillment by being fully present to it in the moment. The same could be said for any pleasure or anything of a passing nature: It has the potential to be fulfilling in that moment if you are present to it, but it is not going to fulfill you because this you (the ego) can never be fulfilled because it is not its nature to be fulfilled but to be dissatisfied. The real you—essence—is fulfilled from just being. When you are identified with essence, then that is what fulfills you, regardless of the specific experience you are having. All experience and any experience is fulfilling to essence; it has no requirements that an experience be any particular way. When you are fully present to any experience, that is how you feel as well. You feel the joy of being—of experiencing. And to feel that way, it doesn’t matter if sex is happening or not. It doesn’t matter if anything in particular is happening.

Love is fulfilling and meaningful to your relationship, but sex in and of itself is not. When love infuses the sexual experience, then that does make it a fulfilling and meaningful experience. When that happens, it means that you are aligned with essence. However, you don’t need to be experiencing sex to experience the love and fulfillment of essence. That is available in any moment.

About fantasies and relationships

It is good to notice that fantasies, by definition, do not match reality. They are therefore very poor guides for choosing a mate. However, we are programmed to think otherwise. We really believe that our fantasies indicate the kind of person we will be happiest with. Life has a plan for your happiness, and it isn’t given to you by way of your fantasies. It is given to you by way of real life: Life brings you the man or woman it intends for you.

About experiencing Oneness with another

Most people, especially when they are around others, spend little time aligned with essence because it is difficult in the presence of others to allow yourself to be this vulnerable for long. Relationships are challenging not only because they trigger our conditioning, but also because we do experience a depth of love through them that can be frightening. There is a solution to this, however. We can become aware of this as it is happening, and choose love instead of the kind of thoughts and conversation that take us out of essence. We can learn to share only thoughts that are expressions of essence and not share thoughts that are expressions of the ego. When shared, thoughts that are expressions of the ego interfere with the experience of love and unity. Once you realize
this, you can choose to ignore these thoughts and move back into the experience of essence.

The way out of the egoic state of consciousness and into essence is not a hard road after all. All it takes is paying attention to the love, joy, peace, contentment, compassion, wisdom, and happiness that are already here in this moment. Can you feel them—even just a little? That is your doorway to essence. Even a sliver of love or peace or joy can take you there. This is also the answer to finding love in relationship: Notice the love that is there and not the other person’s thoughts or even what he or she is doing.

This character in front of you is playing a part. Let that part be played, recognize it as a part, and enjoy it. It is all a great play—lila, as the Hindu mystics say: God playing with God in many forms. What fun. Essence enjoys the characters that we are. Whatever your partner is doing or saying is fine too—from essence—because essence knows that is not the whole truth of him or her. Essence sees the truth about the other, and it loves the other because the other is itself. From essence, it is clear that the other is no different from itself. It feels and sees the sameness. It knows only Oneness. It cannot be fooled by words and behavior and looks. Appearances cannot totally hide the truth. Look into your lover’s eyes and see.

You are here to find love, not just for yourself but for the divine Self, which has been hiding it from you in this world of form just so that you could have the pleasure and amazement of discovering it in the simple quiet of this moment and in your beloved’s eyes.

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**Gina Lake** has a Masters degree in Counseling Psychology. Since 1984, she has used this and her knowledge of astrology to help people understand their spiritual lessons and life purpose. She is the author of several books about spirituality, including *Symbols of the Soul: Discovering Your Karma Through Astrology* and *Radical Happiness: A Guide to Awakening*. She also compiled and edited *Nothing Personal: Seeing Beyond the Illusion of a Separate Self* based on the teachings of her husband, Nirmala, which are about awakening and self-realization.
Consultations

**Gina Lake offers two types of consultations:** an astrological consultation or a channeled session. Their goal is to help you understand yourself and whatever programming interferes with awakening to your true nature and living the life you were meant to live.

**Astrology for Awakening**

You are the Self (the Divine) in disguise! And what a great disguise it is! Discover the personality structure, strengths, and weaknesses of this character you are playing and how it is serving (or not serving) you and the Self that is living through you. The Self has a reason for creating you just this way. Every desire and drive is there for a reason. Find out what the Self’s intentions are for you and how you (your ego and conditioning) might be interfering with these goals. Waking up means allowing the Self to live through you as this character, which is what it came here to do. An understanding of your chart can help you express the joy of the Self rather than the suffering of the ego through this character you call you. The chart also gives you a glimpse of the bigger picture, which will help you understand whatever you are going through and embrace it for the gift that it is.

Consultations are 60-90 minutes, tape recorded for you, and confidential. The fee is $100.00 for a reading of your natal chart, which includes your transits and progressions (what is going on now in your life plan), and $80.00 for follow-up consultations. The fee for a relationship analysis is $120.00. Your birth date, time (within 10 minutes), and place are required. Consultations are held in person or on the phone.

To schedule a session or for more information, call 928-282-5770 or email Gina at ginalakenow@aol.com. Please make checks payable to Endless Satsang Foundation, Inc. and mail to: Gina Lake, 295 Mission Rd, Sedona, AZ 86336.

“I feel very blessed to have had your experienced eye look at my chart, along with having the depth, understanding, and wisdom of your Self helping to put the whole puzzle together so effortlessly and eloquently. There was definitely a greater ability to see overall patterns and the significance of them. In this way, it was extremely helpful and supportive.”

–Victoria Ritchie, Teacher of *The Power of Now*

“What I love is how Gina finds the life lesson in every circumstance and explains how it fits with who I am and my life purpose. She helps me feel that everything is happening just as it should be, and it is all for my soul’s learning. Gina is a spiritual mentor whom I admire, respect, and appreciate for what she’s brought to my life.”

–Kristal Jensen, creative and healing arts
Channeled Guidance for Awakening

Gina is a conscious channel who has been channeling Theo, a collective consciousness on the mid-causal plane, since 1989. Theo is the co-author of Gina’s books and offers satsang—an exploration of the truth of who you are—in the form of a dialogue. In this dialogue, you are invited to ask questions related to the nature of life and any personal issues you may have. Be prepared with questions concerning your personal and spiritual growth. Predictions, past life readings, health readings, financial advice, or information about others without their permission are not part of this exploration.

Consultations are 60 minutes, tape recorded for you, and confidential. The fee is $80. To schedule a consultation or for more information, call (928) 282-5770 or email Gina at ginalakenow@aol.com. Please make checks payable to Endless Satsang Foundation, Inc. and mail to: Gina Lake, 295 Mission Rd, Sedona, AZ 86336.

Gina’s husband, Nirmala, is also available for consultations. For more information, visit www.endless-satsang.com or call (928) 282-5770 or email Nirmalanow@aol.com.