

Being Human

Essays on Thoughtmares, Bouncing Back, and Your True Nature

Amy Johnson, Ph.D.

For Willow and Miller, obviously.

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“Do you know what happens to wildlife when left alone from intellectual minds? It thrives, because thriving is its default setting. Just look at a forest.

And do you know what happens to wildlife when given just a little direction by intellectual minds? It still thrives, because thriving is its default setting. Just look at a rose garden.

And do you know what happens to wildlife when there is too much thinking? Yeah, what wildlife?

Wild thing,
The Universe”

--The Universe (via Mike Dooley, www.tut.com)

Introduction

I was relaxing in my living room in Michigan on a humid afternoon in the summer of 2012, laptop on lap, ear buds in ears, listening to a talk from the 2011 Innate Health Conference held in London 6 months earlier.

The speaker said something that blew my mind. It was incredibly simple and delivered with no emphasis or fanfare whatsoever.

He said that the default, innate nature of all human beings is wellbeing.

That we are all perfectly mentally healthy, full of the clarity and peace of mind we so often chase. He said wellness is our birthright and can't possibly be erased; he also said that when we're not feeling connected to our innate wellness it's only because our personal thinking is in the way, clouding that natural connection.

I backed up the audio and listened five or ten more times to be sure I was hearing him correctly. And then I did something that was very uncharacteristic of me: I pulled out the ear buds, closed the laptop, and lay down on the couch.

While I would typically hear something that resonated with me and want more, more, more; comparing what I had just heard with everything else I had ever learned (How was this like that other theory? How does this fit with what so-and-so have to say? What can I read or Google or who can I call to learn more?) I didn't feel like I wanted more this time. Not in that moment. I wanted to lie in silence for a bit and soak it all in.

In hindsight, what I heard the speaker say on that hot July afternoon shouldn't have shocked me in the least. Besides the fact that I was tuned into a conference called Innate Health (What did I *think* they'd be talking about?), I already knew this stuff.

I had been studying spirituality—along with psychology, mythology, philosophy, and more mainstream self-help—since I was an angst-filled teenager 20 years ago. I was a master certified life coach with a doctorate degree in psychology. I had been working with clients, essentially teaching them that they are inherently well, for nearly a decade.

I already knew that we are all fundamentally connected to each other and to something supremely benevolent that powers all of life.

I was already wholly on board with the idea that we are all born with a direct connection to that universal force. Even as we grow up and feel like the connection has faded, it hasn't. Because it's *who we are*, it can't fade.

And I was already well aware that taking your own idle thinking at face value was the primary cause of suffering.

So why was I so blown away that summer day? It was partly the conviction with which the speaker stated these facts; although I can't remember his name I vividly recall his confidence.

But mostly, it was the simplicity of it all. You are well, period. Everyone on earth. Essentially. Always.

There are no exceptions, caveats, conditions, or rules to remember and there is absolutely nothing you have to do—nothing you even *can* do—to make it more or less true.

Are you skeptical? If you are noticing that in this very moment you are most certainly *not* in touch with your innate wellbeing, I hear you. But ask yourself this: If wellbeing and peace of mind are not home base, why do you fight so hard to return there when you're not there? If stress and mental chaos were home base they would feel like home, wouldn't they? They might feel unpleasant, but they would be natural, familiar, and comfortable on some level.

Stress and mental busyness go against your nature and that's why you struggle to "fix" them. That's why you scramble to return home, to the wellness into which you were born.

Rather than assuming that you have no innate wellbeing, consider instead that you might simply be experiencing a whole mess of personal thinking which appears to cloud your perfect, natural state.

When you're not experiencing your emotional wellness it's only because you're caught up in otherwise arbitrary and habitual thought. Those moments of supreme peace you sometimes experience are *who you naturally are*. When you're experiencing anything else, you're simply in a fog of thought.

Nothing can change your basic nature. Not age, culture, or conditioning. Not abuse, a horrible childhood, or totally unfit parents.

Not joblessness, homelessness, or a truly horrific break-up. Not depression, anxiety, or schizophrenia. Not fear, worry, or obsession.

Your innate wellbeing goes nowhere—it's always right there, only sometimes masked by mental chit-chat.

Isn't that just about the best news you've ever heard?

What this means for you

Something truly magical happens when you deeply get that the thoughts that roll through your mind all day long are not *yours*. You aren't the thinker of your thoughts, any more than you are the breather of your lungs or the beater of your heart.

It's much more accurate to say that thought *arises within you* than to say that *you* think it, like it's more accurate to say that breath arises within you than to say that *you* have to breathe your breath.

Universal energy takes care of generating thought. It's not your job. If you don't hold your breath, new breath rushes in. Similarly, **if you don't "hold" your thoughts (attach to, identify with them), new thought rushes in. There's nothing you have to do.**

You are an open channel through which inner wisdom—that inexplicably wise guidance to which we all have access—can and does pass. **The only thing that ever temporarily blocks that open channel is personal thinking.**

Personal thinking is that inner dialogue that is yours and yours alone. It's your own brand of highly subjective, often biased, sometimes habitual mental chit-chat.

It's that voice in your head that already knows what your partner will say even before you ask a question; that voice that has warned you that you'll probably end up alone, or played out the same fantasy of winning the lottery, or convinced you that ice cream makes everything better for as long as you can remember. Personal thinking is not always harmful, heavy, or habitual—the innocent, random, fleeting thought you experience is personal thinking as well. Personal thinking is essentially the mental dialogue that is always running in your head and that makes up your experience of life.

The good news about personal thinking is that it is always moving. *The* nature of thought is to flow and constantly change and it will always do that when you don't interfere. You interfere when you attach to or identify with thought as if it's "yours"—part of who you are.

If you doubt that thought is insignificant and effortlessly arising within you, watch a two year old. She doesn't identify with or attach to thought, and so her thoughts and emotions flow freely and quickly, unmessed with.

(And if you doubt that your true nature is peace of mind and wellbeing, keep watching that two year old. She may have all kinds of fast-moving thoughts and emotions on the surface—even those that produce fits and tantrums—but because nothing sticks for long, she's constantly bounced right back into her natural wellbeing.)

In addition to always moving and changing, thoughts are also habitual (you have most of the same thoughts today as you did yesterday), subjective (your thoughts are exclusive to you, based on your own unique view of the world), and *completely meaningless* in and of themselves.

One hundred percent of your experience of life comes from thought. Your experience of life is internally generated from within you—inside-out. Quite inconveniently, life always appears as if it's outside-in; as if things outside of you directly impact your experience. They do not. Your consciousness brings your thinking to life like a film projector brings the images on the film to life, resulting in your unique, thought-based reality.

If you're like most people, it can be very difficult to buy into the notion that outside events and other people do not directly impact how you feel. The truth of the matter is that your entire experience of life—including all of your emotions, reactions, and feelings—are created from within you, via thought.

Our perceptual system is designed such that it truly appears as if outside events directly affect us. It looks like being snubbed by your date creates your embarrassment and shame. It really feels like your home flooding or your dog getting sick or your spouse's incessant complaining is creating your frustration and pain. And yet, it's always your *thinking about those things* that creates your experience, not the circumstances themselves.

No two people would react to those events in the exact same way because no two people have the exact same thinking. Even you wouldn't react to those events in the same way at different points in time. We

live an entirely thought-created experience even when—no, *especially* when—it seems as if we don't. When it looks *most compelling* that your hellish boss or the lack of money in your account is creating your emotional state, that's exactly when you have the most personal thinking at play.

Wild, isn't it? Wild, and also incredibly freeing. This is Being Human.

There is nothing to do

Given that your true nature is endless wellbeing, clarity, and peace of mind...and given that new thought is always showing up for you when you don't interfere with the process by holding on to old thought...there's simply nothing to do but *understand the way the system works*.

When you have a deep appreciation for how your experience really works, you can rest in that understanding. When you get just how naturally you are constantly being bounced back to your natural state of clarity and peace, the endless trying and striving and working toward things that you think will make you feel better falls away. There is simply no need to *do* so much. Doing never delivers the feelings you expect it to, anyway.

You can't think yourself back to clarity and you don't have to. **You are clarity, occasionally covered with thought to which you're clinging.** A return to your clear nature only requires that you withdraw your effort and energy, and wait.

When you insightfully get that your entire experience of life is thought-created and that thought is impermanent and meaningless, there's nothing more to do.

You might hate me a little bit

As I suggest throughout this book that life is so much easier than you're making it, and that there is really nothing to do; that you can stop the striving because you're already "there," already perfect, and already have peace of mind just under the surface, you might hate me just a little bit. If you are anything like I was not all that long ago, people who tell you to *do less* when you're very conditioned to do *more, more, more* will drive you insane.

I realize that my repeated insistence that you have endless wellbeing *now*, especially when you don't *feel* that endless wellbeing, may be annoying. I'm okay with that. I mean, I want you enjoy reading this book and I'd rather you didn't curse me as you read it, but if that's what has to happen, I'm okay with it. Lying to you isn't an option.

Giving you the "5 Steps to Happiness," a bunch of exercises to complete in your journal before you move on to the next chapter, or daily practices and techniques isn't an option either. Peace of mind is *way* easier than all of that. When people tell me I'm taking a risk by not giving you the self-help format you're used to, I say I'll gladly take that risk. I'm not willing to make it harder than it is for the sake of handing you a book that feels familiar.

Besides, homework isn't my style. I'd rather you read for fun and allow these insights to land as they will and when they will than imagine you sitting there with a notebook and highlighter, muscling through it.

If you can read this book the way you'd read a text message from your best friend or the way you'd listen to your favorite song...easily, not analyzing the ideas as much as getting the overall *feel* of them, you'll be in a great position to get the most out of what's here.

And if my insistence that you are much closer to your infinite wellbeing than you think and that there's nothing you have to do but see it becomes annoying, I'm sorry. It's for your own good, I promise.

More on Insightfully "Getting It"

Like my experience listening to that Innate Health speaker last summer, you may already know much of what you read here. But there is an enormous difference between intellectually understanding something and truly getting it as a personal truth.

I can't tell you how often I hear things like, "I know that the approval of others doesn't mean I'm more worthy, but I keep chasing it anyway," or "Oh, I totally get what you're saying about our experience of life coming from within us rather than from outside events, but I'll be so much happier when I'm in the new house (job, marriage, dress size, etc.)."

If that sounds like you, you're in good company. You do "get it" to a degree, but perhaps not on the level at which I hope for you to get it. You have an intellectual understanding, but not an insightful understanding. How do you know when you've moved from a limited and relatively shallow intellectual understanding to a deep and profound insight about something? You know because your life changes. *You* don't change your life; your life simply changes.

My favorite story about the power of insight comes from author and spiritual teacher Byron Katie. In her book *I Need Your Love—Is that True?*, Katie tells of how she was once hiking in the Mojave Desert and came face to face with a rattlesnake. She was terrified, and had thoughts like "This is the end of me" and "They'll find my body here someday"; she had physical reactions such as a racing heart, nausea, and sweaty palms; and she experienced panic and going into the fight or flight response. Then something caused Katie to look again. As she looked more closely she realized that the rattlesnake was actually a rope. As soon as she really saw that, everything changed; the scary thoughts, physical reactions, and panic vanished.

Katie says: "What had happened? I knew one thing: I was safe. I knew that I could stand over that rope for a thousand years and never be frightened of it again. I felt such gratitude and ease. The entire world could come upon this snake, scream, run away, have heart attacks, scare themselves to death—and I could just remain here fearlessly, and pass on the good news. I would understand people's fears, see their pain, hear their stories about why it really is a snake, and yet there would be no way that I could believe them or be frightened of that rope. I had fallen into the simple truth: *That snake is a rope.*"¹

One brand new thought ("That snake is a rope") changed everything. With her new thought came a new reality, and she couldn't possibly bring herself to go back to being afraid of the rope again despite the strength of that initial fear. Katie's deep insight about the rattlesnake gave her a new truth, much like

¹ Byron Katie, *I Need Your Love—Is That True? How to Stop Seeking Love, Approval, and Appreciation and Start Finding Them Instead* (New York: Three Rivers Press/Crown Publishing Group, 2005).

when you wake from sleep to realize that you were only dreaming, or when you show your toddler that the scary monster under the bed is only the witless cat. It's the same when you have a personal insight (i.e., a new thought) that leads you to see that what you previously took as truth is not.

As you read the essays in this book, feel for what resonates with you without thinking too much—which is great practice, anyway. The way I'm suggesting you absorb this book is actually what this book is *about*, in a sense. See if you can allow personal thought to do what it does in the background. When reasoning, analysis, and “How is this concept like that?” and “I wonder what she means by this?” take a backseat, a deeper feeling can step up and speak to you directly. That deeper feeling will often be a brand new thought—and just one brand new thought is all that's ever needed to see everything in a different light.

Post (Modern) Enlightenment

As you might expect, my understanding of our human experience has evolved a bit since I wrote my first book, *Modern Enlightenment: Psychological, Spiritual, and Practical Ideas for a Better Life*.

Being enlightened is remarkably simpler than I once believed.

I used to suggest you get your hands dirty in the *content* of your thinking. I'd teach you to notice and monitor your inner dialogue enough to identify the thoughts you assumed were responsible for your suffering. You could then examine, question, and analyze those thoughts.

I helped my clients apply logic to their painful thoughts in order to see them in a new way. Sometimes those thoughts would be altered as a result of all of that work; sometimes they wouldn't.

It was a very active process. And although I still consider thought content at times, as you can tell by what you've read thus far, it's more work than you need to do.

Also, while many books that may appear similar to this one espouse positive thinking, the approach here is a bit different.

Because you're always feeling your thinking, yes, positive thoughts will certainly lead you to feel more positive than negative thoughts. To the extent that you *can* choose your thoughts, know that choosing happier ones will probably make you happier than choosing unhappy ones.

It's just that, in my experience, I'm not sure you can always choose your thoughts so easily. Thoughts arise within us and, while we do have some say in which ones we attach to and identify with, that process often happens automatically, beyond our awareness.

I don't know about you, but I've often had the experience of a thought feeling like it has such a hold on me that I couldn't change it if I tried; in fact, trying to change it puts so much attention on it that it often seems to cement the thought in place—just the opposite of what you want!

Trying to “think better thoughts,” in addition to being difficult and often making your *unwanted* thoughts even stickier, can sometimes feel like a lie. It's a tough job when it works at all.

The alternative to that very active and effortful monitoring, tracking, and analyzing is this: *Understanding that the nature of thought is the source of your entire experience of life.*

When you get that *all* experience is thought-created—that what you’re feeling is always and only your own thinking, not some objective reality outside of yourself—everything changes. There is no need to dissect each painful thought when you truly see that thought is arbitrary and fleeting. All you have to do is not attach to every bit of mental chit-chat that floats through your mind and wait as it’s replaced with new and different chit-chat.

All you have to do is not be afraid of your own experiences and not take it all so seriously

Although I can’t imagine it getting much simpler than this, I could be wrong. With any luck, I’ll continue to deepen my understanding—and, in my next book, I’ll be able to point out how it’s even simpler than this.

The Three Principles

Many of the ideas and observations you’ll read about in this book are quite consistent with what those unusually peaceful people at the Innate Health Conference speak about, a field of Psychology also sometimes known as Psychology of Mind or The Three Principles. If you want to learn more about The Three Principles, please refer to the Resources listed at the end of this book.

Although I’ve been very influenced by The Principles in the past year, I don’t officially write or work with clients from that perspective. What you’ll read in this book is simply my current understanding of the way life works based on the entirety of the influences in my life, not least of all my own inner guidance. I’ve found that when I set down the thousands of books I’ve read and step away from the formal training and mentoring, that guidance often shows up and does much of the heavy lifting for me.

Being Human is not a self-help book.

That’s right, it’s not.

You don’t need to change. You certainly don’t need to become a better or different version of yourself.

The cause of any “problem” you experience is the belief that things should be different than they are. The cause of any “problem” with yourself is the belief that you are lacking or need something you don’t already possess. Or, as Robert Holden says, "The fear that something is wrong with you is your greatest block to joy. In truth, there is no other block."

The only “self-help” I have to offer is pointing you toward the truth about your “self” and helping you gain a deeper understanding about the human experience. Those are what this book aims to provide.

I couldn’t possibly know more about how you should live your life than you do. This book is not a prescription for how to think or behave, but more of a simple depiction of what I’ve found to be true about life.

When you aren’t afraid of your emotions and you don’t take it all so seriously, Being Human is infinitely easy and unbelievably wonderful.

The structure of this book

Most of the essays in this book were originally published in my free weekly newsletter (which you can receive by visiting www.DrAmyJohnson.com), on my blog, or on other websites and blogs around the net.

In addition to the short essays, there are several *Conversations with Clients* which are—you guessed it—segments of real email exchanges I had with clients. I’ve included portions of conversations that exemplify the ideas in the essays so that you can see how a real conversation on that topic might (and did) actually go. The conversations highlight how people grapple with applying these principles to their everyday life. You’ll be able to relate to many of the client concerns discussed in those conversations, which will help you get these truths on a much deeper level. The *Conversations with Clients* sections are designed to facilitate your own personal insights.

Although I’ve stripped the conversations of any identifying information, I still asked each client’s permission before sharing our chat, just for good measure. They each said yes, obviously. I work with some truly incredible people, as I’m proud to show you in the pages that follow.

First Elements

While the majority of the essays in this book have nothing to do with children, quite a few of them do. I write about kids more than, say, poodles or apple trees or swimming pools. Why?

Well, I have two of them. As I write this Introduction, my daughter Willow is 3 ½ and my son Miller is 17 months old. Because the essays in this book were written over the span of roughly a year, Willow was somewhere between 2 ½ and 3 ½ and Miller was 3 to 17 months. Not that it matters to you, the flow of the book, or the ideas I’m sharing—it’s no doubt my own hang-ups that compel me to explain this fact (Willow can only say “Mommy waaah” in *On the Night You Were Born* but she’s telling stories in *Playing the Game*...will that confuse readers?). So, there you have it. My kids will crawl and babble in one essay and sing and cartwheel in the next. This is why.

But this book is not a vehicle to showcase my own adorable kids. I write about Willow and Miller not only because of the countless things they’ve taught me in their short lives, but because this book is about those things that are natural and innate to all humans on earth. This book is about our default, underlying state, before programming and conditioning take hold. It’s about what’s there before we grow up and begin to take our thinking too seriously; before we become overly identified with a *self*, and before it’s possible that that self is anything less than perfect. It’s about Being Human in the purest sense.

I’ve just happened to live with a couple little people still tapped into to their factory default settings for the past few years. There is simply no better way to see what is natural and innate than to observe children—so in some of these essays, we’ll observe mine.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu explained why children are such wonderful teachers of what is innate when he described the “first elements” that underlie all of human life:

“You want the first elements?”

The infant has them.

Free from care, unaware of self,

He acts without reflection,

Stays where he is put,

Does not know why,

Does not figure things out,

Just goes along with them,

Is part of the current.

These are the first elements! “²

Unaware of self...can you imagine not being constantly aware of yourself? You catch glimpses here and there, especially when you are fully absorbed in a task or taking care of another living thing. It’s as if “you” have melded with the world around you. The absence of “Am I doing the right thing?” “What do they think of me?” “What should I do next?” feels pretty incredible. Babies and very young children live there.

He acts without reflection...young children don’t think about what they are going to do, they simply act, without reflection, analysis, and judgment. As you’ll read throughout this book, simply doing what you feel compelled to do with a minimum of personal thinking is not only enormously easier, it yields infinitely better results.

Stays where he is put...babies are fully and completely where they are; they aren’t doing one thing and thinking about another as adults often are; they are present and satisfied. Grown-ups’ constant striving for *bigger, better, more, or what could be* leaves us feeling empty and unfulfilled. We’re left thinking, “There must be more than this”—because inherent in the quest for more, bigger, better is the belief that whatever we have *now* is not enough.

Does not figure things out, just goes along with them, is part of the current...babies innately know that life flows through them. There is very little they have to do, which is good news because there is so little they *can* do. Something shifts as we grow up and become capable of reasoning, figuring, and manipulating—we assume we can do a better job at life than the life that created us and so we interfere with what is already in motion.

With that, can I introduce you to a boy named Miller?

² Thomas Merton. *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1969). Quoted in Tom Shadyac. *Life’s Operating Manual: With the Fear and Truth Dialogues* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House Publishing, 2013).

1. How to Live with Your Mind at Ease, Reveling in the Experience of Being Alive

“I decided to start anew, to strip away what I had been taught.” —Georgia O’Keefe

There once was a boy named Miller.

He was born a perfect baby—as all babies are—on a perfect January morning just before sunrise. Of course his mother thought he was remarkable in many extraordinary ways, but in reality, he was no more or less perfect than any other baby who had ever been born.

Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

He acted without reflection. Miller didn’t take the actions of people around him personally because he didn’t conceive of a “self” that was separate from “them.” With things out in the world not about “him” in any way, life was infinitely easy.

Miller experienced life as it unfolded as purely and unfiltered as a perfect baby can.

He appeared to feel content quite often, but he experienced a lot of other emotions too. His parents described him as a mostly happy baby, but he certainly wasn’t *always* happy. He cried a fair bit (especially as his parents were hoping to sleep at night) and became angry (at the suggestion of drinking from a plastic bottle rather than directly from his mother) at times. He also experienced what looked like fear (of the vacuum cleaner), frustration (at painful incoming teeth), and disgust (two words: scrambled eggs).

To the adults around him, Miller appeared to cycle through a wide range of emotions quite swiftly and naturally, like a scattered thunderstorm passing overhead.

Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

As he grew older, Miller began to see boundaries. Faint at first, he nonetheless formed the concept of a “self” as distinct and separate from the rest of the world, first evidenced when his older sister was handed a snack and he ran over yelling “me, me, me, me!” The adults in his life found this rather adorable despite the fact that he was clearly becoming more like “them” (a thought that made his mother proud, but also a little sad).

Miller’s emotions began to “stick” as he grew older. Rather than assessing his mood moment to moment, his parents began to say things like “Miller is being silly today,” or “Miller is having a tough afternoon.” Of course, those statements probably reflected his parents’ biases as much as his own evolution, but his emotions definitely appeared to become less transient as he grew more verbal and intelligent.

Nonetheless, underneath it all, Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

As he grew into adolescence, Miller thought about “himself” more and more, but he always remembered the truth; those boundaries he saw between himself and the rest of life were illusory. Because he knew that, he tended to behave more kindly toward other children and the world around him than some of his young friends. Don’t get me wrong: Miller was like other little boys, for the most part. But it rarely occurred to him to do things like throw trash on the ground or call kids at school names. Those behaviors simply didn’t cross his mind much and, if they did, he dismissed them instead of acting on them.

He didn't try very hard to figure things out because—in his experience—most problems in life figured themselves out. Making that his job (the way the adults around him seemed to) looked a little senseless to Miller.

Miller knew that the thoughts that ran through his mind were fleeting and meaningless. He didn't take them very seriously most of the time; he simply noticed them with curiosity or disinterest.

This wasn't *always* true—like all humans, he got caught up in his thinking from time to time. His thought-storms tended to be calmer, shorter, and less destructive than his friends', however, because he understood the fleeting and biased nature of thought. Why get caught up in something that wasn't real and would change in a flash?

When Miller was feeling particularly unpleasant he remembered what his mother had always told him: You're always and only feeling your thinking, and thoughts and feelings are nothing to be afraid of. He understood that thoughts and feelings come and go, and that there was nothing in his experience to fear. That seemed to help him bounce back quite quickly and he rarely felt stuck in a bad feeling for very long.

Miller's mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

As a teenager, Miller had his share of ups and downs. Things didn't always go his way. The girl he loved broke up with him one day and that threw him for a loop. He felt deep sadness, then anger, and then loneliness. He questioned his own worth, like humans are wont to do.

But Miller knew something not all teenage boys know: he knew he would bounce back to the underlying peace and connection that was there in all of life. Because peace and connection were who he was—his true nature—he knew he'd effortlessly return there and he didn't have to actively *do* anything. *He* didn't have to "get over the girl" or "move on" at all; those things would happen naturally on his behalf. Knowing that he wouldn't get stuck in his dark feelings forever made the darkness a wee bit lighter. He still wanted his girlfriend back but, well, such is life. A deeper part of him knew he'd always be okay no matter what.

Miller's mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

As Miller grew into a man, he delighted in life, just like he had as a baby. He embraced change and welcomed challenge, which gave him a somewhat revered status among other adults. They looked at him and thought, "What is it with that guy? Is he not afraid of anything? Does he not care what people think, or that he might fail, or that he could lose everything?"

The truth was that sure, daunting scenarios of letting down his family or ending up in a van by the river occasionally passed through his mind. But Miller knew that those thoughts passed through all human minds from time to time—he didn't believe they were his alone. He saw through their scary tone and the feelings they brought with them. They were more like shadows on the wall that *only look like* a monster than they were any kind of *real* monster. As such, he dismissed them relatively easily.

Miller followed his heart with reckless abandon because he knew he ultimately had nothing to lose. Peace and contentment were his birthright—they were who he was, not things he had to earn. He couldn't earn them any more than he could lose them, so he simply didn't take circumstances so seriously. Peace and contentment weren't at stake, so life looked rather safe to Miller.

He scratched his head as he watched his friends worry themselves sick over landing the “right” job or as he watched them fail to go after their dreams because “What if it doesn’t work out?” or “What will people think?” Because Miller knew without question that he could have a wonderful life regardless of the details, he simply wasn’t held back in the same way. He did what he wanted to do and bounced back from disappointment easily.

Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

Miller was kind to himself. He felt compassion much more than judgment toward himself and others. After all, he reasoned, we’re all just humans doing what we believe is best. The way he looked at it, no one was truly to *blame* for what he or she did—what good was blame? Blame and judgment require some objective right and wrong and Miller didn’t quite see the world that way. He believed that people did what made sense to them given their current thinking—and he certainly couldn’t fault someone for falling into the same insecure thinking that all humans fall into now and then.

So, while Miller lived through the same up and down circumstances as the people around him, his experience of those circumstances was quite different. And while he felt the same dark emotions from time to time, his comfort with those emotions ensured that he bounced back from them very quickly.

Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

Miller spent his life doing the things he loved most. He played a lot. He loved a lot, worked a lot (on things that felt like love), and enjoyed deep connection with the people around him. He often felt as if he were being guided through life. Miller loved using logic and his incredible intellect to solve puzzles and satisfy his intellectual curiosity, but he understood the limits of his thinking mind. He was often quietly tapped into what he called “Big Mind,” and it felt miraculous—like home.

Miller’s mind was at ease and he reveled in the experience of being alive.

Does Miller’s life sound unrealistic or too good to be true? I used to think it did, but now I know it’s not too good to be true at all.

This is what Being Human can look like for anyone—even you—when you know that you are fundamentally well. When you aren’t afraid of your thoughts and emotions because you see them for what they are—the fleeting, surface-level, stuff of life—your thoughts and emotions have no power over you. When you don’t try to “fix” them, those thoughts and emotions relax on their own and you catch amazing glimpses of the “you” that is always there beneath them.

Your experience of life can be this peaceful. In fact, it’s your birthright.