

What Words Do and What We Humans Do with Words, Self-Knowledge, Power With, Wisdom Practices

Today I am going to be doing some exploration of words and wisdom — using words, of course, which never quite get you to wisdom. They may point toward wisdom, they can be supports and guidelines, but they are not necessarily truth. They're creative and co-creative tools.

Let's begin by talking a little bit about words. Some of this I've said before, but each time you hear a set of words, you tend to give them a little different meaning or maybe get a deeper understanding of them. That's what I hope will happen by my repeating some of these ideas.

Alfred Korzybski is famous for the saying, "The map is not the territory." I like to expand on that. You probably could, too. The words are not the experience. The menu is not the food we eat. The words in the book are not the experience of sitting in a chair reading.

Looking at a map, let's say a road map of Florida — because there are many kinds of maps of Florida that we could create, but looking at a road map of Florida — is not the same as driving through Florida. That's a really important understanding to get, because once you get that, you can start dancing with the words, dancing with the maps, co-creating new maps of the same territory or maybe the same map of a different territory.

You start dancing with this and it's fun. It's very much like an Indra's net, what we're doing here. Sometimes it will seem as if all the words and ideas are connecting with one another. At other times, it will feel as if they are very contradictory and disparate. All that is okay. All that is part of this dance that we do together.

You can think of a moving picture. You are a part of that moving picture. It goes where it goes, and you don't really know where it's going to go. But what our minds do and what words do is that we stop the moving picture at a single frame so that we can chop it up and see how the parts connect and understand how they all work together. By doing that — the very fact that we do that — we create a separation, an arbitrary illusory separation between ourselves and the actual flow of experience because while our minds are doing this, the flow continues on. That's an overview of the relationship between words and experience.

Let's just talk for a minute about words. What do words do? Most of the time they separate. There are a few exceptions like "whoosh," for example, but most of the time they separate — high/low, good/bad, right/wrong, black/white, Jew/Christian/Hindu/member of Islam/a Taoist. Most of the time they separate, divide, and categorize.

They also allow us to map our experiences in many different ways. For example, going back to that idea of a map of Florida, we can have a road map, we can have a map of all the waterways, we can have an ecological map, we can have a map from a satellite, we can have a map up

close, so that we can move in and out at all different levels of experience. The maps change as the focus changes or the experience changes. Words and maps temporarily transport us into imaginary and illusory worldviews, but they're fun to play with, and they can give meaning and purpose to our lives.

What do we humans do with these words that we have made up and created? If you go back to the story in Genesis about eating of the Tree of Knowledge, that action *did* separate us from the Garden of Eden, the pure flow of experience.

Why did we do this? Why did we create these words? How can we use them?

We can use them in both positive and negative ways. We can use our words, certainly, to understand our experiences — that's pulling ourselves and our minds out of the flow and watching the flow as if it's separate and apart from us. We can use words to communicate with one another. We can use them to understand our relationships. We can distinguish.

There are times when this is really useful, but there are times when it can be very unhelpful, depending on your intention, depending on what you want your words to do and what you want to do with them. For example, if we attach emotional content to words and we say, "Black is bad and white is good," for example, then we're giving a whole new dimension to our words, and it may not be helpful if what we want to do is co-create a peaceful, powerful, prosperous planet.

Sometimes we use words to try to improve our sense of self-worth. We give ourselves credentials, accomplishments and goals that we've attained — things like that. There are other times, unfortunately, when we use words to manipulate and control other people. This can be either intentionally or unintentionally. Generally, this does not work. We get into these "power over" and "power against" struggles using words, which I've also talked about on other broadcasts, so I won't go into that in depth.

The territory is what it is, but we tend to fight with one another over our maps, for lots of different reasons. This puts us into a "power over" or "power against" dynamic. Where we darned well better go if we want to survive as a species is shifting into a "power with" dynamic. That is what wisdom practices are all about.

This show is Dancing with Words — and we talked a bit about that. Now, we're going to talk about Dancing with Wisdom.

We've talked about using words to try to change things out there, whether it's people or our environment or whatever. Sometimes that's useful and sometimes it works. But we can also use words to change ourselves, which is much more effective. It's also a way of shifting us into a "power with" energy space — Beingness. This is an internal power with oneself — being comfortable in one's own body, in one's own skin, in one's own mind, in one's own emotions.

But also, for me at least, there's a connection with a "Power greater than myself," which is a reconnecting with that experiential flow. It's very hard to talk about this because it is totally experiential.

Why do we need these wisdom practices? Because we ate of the Tree of Knowledge and separated ourselves from the flow of experience. So how can we use these analytic, divisive words to get us back into that very comfortable flow of Beingness? It's not easy. The words are fingers pointing at the moon. The words are not the moon. The words and the maps are not Truth. They are reflections that help us make meaning out of our lives.

First of all, let me separate this discussion into wisdom practices that support knowing oneself. "Knowing oneself." Those were the words on the Temple of Delphi in Greece. I believe Socrates also said, "Know thyself." This is vital. How do you use words to know yourself? The whole thing is a dance. You can't say there are right or wrong words, but there are words that are useful or helpful or words that will suddenly give you a new idea or a new perspective that fits in with, and helps solve, something you are struggling with.

Here are some personal wisdom practices that support knowing oneself. **Learn to speak in first-person singular language.** "I think this. I feel this." You could add "in this moment" because what you think and feel may change. "I think, I feel, I need" — if you have needs — and then you can ask questions like, "What are my choices in this situation?" That moves into action decision-making. But use first-person singular because that will empower you to be the very best person that you can be, and it will empower you to get to know yourself.

The second linguistic support for knowing oneself is to **ask the right questions.** This is very similar to the first suggestion or guideline of using first-person singular language. When you are focused on what another person is doing wrong, you are going to be asking yourself questions like, "Why does he not put his tools away when he's finished with them? Why can't he cut the grass when it needs to be cut?" Those are very disempowering questions. They are also questions that separate you from the other person.

If you shift those questions around to "What do I need?" or "What would I like to see happen?" "I would like to see the grass cut." "How can I get the grass cut?" There are lots of answers to that question. I can go out and cut it myself. I can ask my husband to cut it. I can ask my kids to cut it. I can hire somebody to come in and do it for me.

That is an empowering question as opposed to a disempowering question. If you start complaining to your husband about the fact that he's not cutting the grass, you will probably just create greater separation between you and your husband. You might get the grass cut, but what do you want your relationship with your husband to be?

Let's explore a few more of these practices that I have found very helpful. (I have not originated most of these. I have learned them from other people, because I've been open to listening to what other people have learned and what they can communicate to me.)

Let's talk about affirmations. **Affirmations** are a really valuable practice to use particularly when you're feeling not good enough, stupid, or something's gone wrong in your life. It's a way of getting you back into that positive energy of feeling centered and in the flow of connection.

Rather than talk about affirmations, which creates a separation between me and the affirmations, and between you and the affirmations, let me see if I can use my words, dance with my words in a way that will hopefully give you some kind of an experience of what affirmations can do for you if you start putting them into your life as a wisdom practice for getting to know yourself better.

I am asking you to give yourself permission. Notice I'm not saying do this, but give yourself permission to get comfortable in your chair. You can place both feet on the floor if you'd like so that you feel more grounded and more connected with the earth. You can rest your arms on your lap, palms up, which allows you to receive energy from the Cosmos, from the universe.

Close your eyes, relax, and give yourself permission to breathe easily. Just absorb these words and realize that this is who you are. I'm using first-person singular here. Notice that.

I am beautiful and I attract beautiful things into my life.

I believe in myself completely.

I have an excellent mind that can solve any problem.

I am a powerful person.

My positive, enthusiastic personality is infectious.

My health is excellent because I take good care of my body, mind and spirit.

I attract abundance into my life. All of my efforts are productive.

I am full of positive energy and people respond to me in a positive way.

I am confident, relaxed and poised.

All of my efforts bring rich rewards.

I interact with all people and draw out the best in them.

I empower all with whom I have contact to be all that they can be. When other people become all they can be, that enhances my life as well.

I encourage play and relaxation, and I, too, play and am relaxed.

Life is fun. Life is an adventure. I open my heart and my arms to all who want to join me in this adventure. Together we create marvelous new worlds of beauty and laughter.

I love life. I am a winner. I am a success in everything I do.

I fulfill my destiny, and I am provided with everything I need to do so.

I support and teach those who want to grow with me, and I learn from those who know things I do not.

Together we are a living, breathing universe, fulfilling universal principles of love, respect, creativity and justice. We are all part of the universal creative flow.

I am so grateful for all I have been given.

As you are ready, I invite you to open your eyes.

As I was reading through these affirmations, you might have had your own emotional responses to some of them. You might have been saying, "I'm not like that." Well, you use the affirmations to change that sense of "not being like that" into "being like that."

Let's talk about another wisdom practice or transformational practice. You can call it whichever word feels better to you. I'm talking here specifically about **creating vision boards**. This has a very similar purpose to the affirmations. The purpose is to help you feel good about who you are and support you in co-creating what matters in your personal life — your personal purpose — but also helping all of us co-create the kind of world in which we would all like to live.

A vision board also helps you establish or get clear on what your intentions are, which relates to one of the suggestions in the Buddhist Eightfold Path -- right intention. It's helping you get clear on your intentions, just by doing this particular process.

What is a vision board? A vision board is a unique collage. This is a collage that you are creating from words and pictures that bring you joy, purpose and meaning. It is your vision of what your life would be like if it were exactly the way you wanted it to be.

Why do you need a vision board? It refocuses your attention and your intention on all the good things you want to bring into your life. Your right attention and right intention help manifest those good things in your life. This is a really very interesting energetic shift to watch because as you focus on the good things in your life and you set clear intentions on where you want your life to go, it somehow goes in that direction. I don't know why it works that way, but I know that it does.

How do you make a vision board? Give yourself a couple of hours. Get yourself a big piece of poster board, a pile of old magazines, a pair of scissors, and some glue. Look through the magazines and cut out anything you like, anything that attracts you, whether it's pictures of food, or words, beautiful homes, scenery, exotic places. Add photos of your family if you have family members that you're particularly fond of. When your pile of cutouts and photos is large enough, arrange them any way you want on the poster board. It's your collage, your poster board, your vision board, so you can do anything you want with it.

When you have a design you like, paste the words and pictures down. If you want to, you can actually have your vision board laminated for more durability.

What do you do with this vision board once you have it done? How do you use it? Once your vision board is finished, hang it on a wall where you will see it every day. This is a maintenance practice. It's a constant reminder of what really matters to you and what you want to bring into your life and how you want to live your life. Look at it to remind yourself what your interests are.

Personally, I've made seven vision boards at different points of my life. Your vision boards will change. As you mature, you get more understanding, you get more education, you have new experiences, new visions will open up for you. So, don't expect these to remain constant or don't expect one to last for your entire life.

Put them up on your wall where you can see them every day. Look for new patterns and insights. Invite your friends to look at your vision board and tell you what they see. In fact, it's fun to have a vision board party and let everybody do his or her own vision board. But you're all in the same space, and then you can easily look at one another's vision boards and talk about them and share ideas about them.

Once you get them up on your wall, you can sit back and just watch as the words and pictures on your vision board start showing up in your life.

At this point, I think I have manifested every single item on every single vision board I ever created, and I began doing these 20 years ago. They show up somehow. How does it happen? I haven't the foggiest idea, but I know that it does.

Let's talk about another practice. These are all related and these are all using words, using thoughts and using ideas to focus you. It's a maintenance practice to focus you on the positive things in your life and bringing positive things into your life.

Let's talk briefly about **journaling**. I've spoken about journaling before in my interviews with some of my guests. I'll just touch briefly on it here again. It's a practice using words. The most important thing about journaling — which is just writing some challenge and letting your mind go where it will and writing down the thoughts — is no censorship. This is a conversation with self.

This is a very private practice. These are *your* words to *you* going through the paper. Whatever comes into your mind goes down on that paper. You will be surprised. No censorship is vital. It's not straight-line thinking, but you'll start seeing connections between experiences and thoughts. After you circle around a few times, you will come out in a totally different place from where you started with a way to move forward.

Here is another personal wisdom practice that you can dance with or play with if it attracts you. It's fun. At least I found it to be fun — **writing poetry**. It will shift you away from the literal meanings of your words. It allows you somehow to touch, even if for only a moment, a deeper connection with the mystery of your life.

Suddenly, I probably spent two or three years of my life doing nothing but writing poetry. I was fascinated with it. But I don't think you can really write poetry until you allow yourself to experience something very deeply, and then the poetry somehow reflects that very deep experience.

I thought it might be fun for me to read a few of my own poems. A lot of these are probably 25 years old. It may take a little while for you to “get” some of them. You might have to think about them.

REFLECTIONS

Reflections of reality
twisted and skewed by motion
mirror faithfully only when motion ceases

TODAY

Today

I noticed myself
worrying about future catastrophes

missing the brilliant sun
shining on azure bays

Now

DOORMAT

Today

I noticed my anger and pain
directed outward
blaming

Again, I'd laid myself down like a doormat
walked on, trampled, scuffed

I didn't deserve that treatment

But who put me there?

(This next one is called "Dawn." These are a form of Japanese poetry called haiku. These are fun to do. Five syllables in the first line. Seven syllables in the second line, five syllables in the third line.)

DAWN

A cardinal trills
its welcoming reveille
through stillness of mind

You start thinking about these poems, and they have a lot of meaning. For example, *Dawn* is about waking up. Oh! I'm paying attention to what's going on around me.

I AM

Rose shadow flattened on wall
without color or depth
mirrors shadows of people fearing self-knowledge

MIND

Monsters created
through machinations of mind
Self destruct. Let go.

Terror and trembling
body's rebellion against
mind rigid commands

Mind forms false idols
creating separation
analysis splits

Mind logical tool
analyzes, deduces
from faith in premise

Words twist and distort
the perfect imperfection
Wholeness divided

This one is called "As We Grow."

AS WE GROW

We become less sure with age.
The sharp-edged truths of adolescence
blur as experience warps their edges.

Yet we become surer.
Just as surrender precedes fulfillment
and abandonment precedes caring
we wield our life brush, unknowing where the strokes will lead
but trusting gentleness, instinct, love.

While I could read lots more poems, let's move on to another personal wisdom transformational practice, which is **mantras**.

What are mantras? According to Thomas Ashley-Farrand, mantras are sacred words of power. This comes from the Hindu tradition. According to others, they are energy-based sounds embodying the highest spiritual state. Yet others refer to them as sound mysteries that change consciousness.

Some time ago, a friend sent me an email with a link to a series of Sounds True audios about Sanskrit mantras. Knowing that I was working on another book about word energy, my foreign rights agent had previously mentioned Sanskrit as a language I should explore.

Western language uses symbolism and meaning. Sanskrit uses the pure vibration of the sound.

I ordered the audios and began listening. There was a mantra for bringing abundance into your life. Phonetically it sounds like "Om shreem kleem Lakshmi ay namaha." It's toned on a single note for the most part with the "ay" one note higher and the "ma" in the namaha one note lower.

It's composed of seed mantras. Shreem is the principle of abundance. Kleem is the principle of attraction. Lakshmi is the goddess of abundance, a beautiful woman with abundance flowing from her hands. Namaha means to salute.

According to Sanskrit philosophy, you can attract abundance into your life simply by saying over and over the simple seed mantra "shreem."

The longer mantra is supposed to be more powerful. I decided to play with the longer mantra and see what happened.

As I was driving to the Tampa Airport to fly to Panama, I repeated the mantra over and over. Then, I forgot about it. When I arrived in Panama, there was a penny lying on the ground beneath my feet. Three days later, in Boquete, my travel agent, out of the blue, gave me a free \$3 phone card. Then my agent at the bank gave me two free 2011 calendars.

As so often happens in Panama, I fully expected the taxi driver who took me back to Boquete to notice that I was an American and triple his fee. He didn't. It happened a second time. Greetings, meetings, lunches and dinners kept flowing in.

The kicker happened shortly before I arrived home. I'd been getting about ten hits a day on my website. Suddenly the hits jumped to over a hundred.

Is there something going on here that I don't understand, but that somehow seems to work? Or is it just that, as I focus on abundance, I become more aware of the abundance all around me flowing into my life? I don't know the answer, but I think I'll continue chanting the mantras.