

The Enduring Joys of Practice

Excerpt from *The Life We Are Given* (p. 35-36)

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Since earliest childhood, we have been told we must practice in order to achieve our goals. This has led us to assume that practice is merely a means, not an end in itself, and indeed that much of what we do in life is of value only for what we will get out of it sometime later. In our ITP classes, we have certain goals--our affirmations, for example--and our practice makes it possible to achieve them. But that is only part of the equation. We don't just practice to achieve our goals, we have goals in order to enhance our practice, for we regard practice as having great value in itself.



As might be expected, there was some resistance to a regular practice on the part of almost every participant. Resistance to any significant change, whether it be for the worse or better, is a natural tendency of all living organisms, and this often ignored aspect of existence will be treated at length in the next chapter. Some participants never overcame that resistance. A few dropped out. As the weeks stretched into months, however, most of us experienced an ever-increasing richness in our practice. If at first we resisted doing the Kata, finally the moment came when a day without it seemed incomplete. For some participants it was the sense of community, the feeling of being joined with others in a meaningful enterprise, that seemed most rich. For some it was the creation of a calm core, a center of stability in the midst of the ups and downs, the vicissitudes that mark life in the electronic age. For most of us there was the tingling, fully alive feeling that comes from good health in the broadest sense: the health of body, mind, heart and soul. And for all of us was the vision that first brought us together: the awesome knowledge that the universe is embarked on an enormous journey of evolution and that each of us has a chance to make a positive contribution--no matter how small, how incremental--to that journey. It is, after all, the accretion of minute changes that ultimately powers the most startling evolutionary leaps.

When Cycle 93 ended on November 27, 1993, we stepped back to assess the results and implications of the study we had conducted and to write this book. Integral Transformative Practice, as we see it, is a work in progress, which will continue to develop. Still, we feel that what we learned from the class, added to the learning of our two lifetimes, provides the guidance necessary to specify a practice now, one that not only will enhance individual lives but also will be of significant social value.

...ITP is a portable discipline. Becoming consciously involved in your own evolution and that of your culture can begin with something as simple as taking your first step on a path of practice.