

Excerpt from *The Life We Are Given—Chapter 2*

The Adventure Begins (p. 28 – 32)

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The Fruits of Long-term Practice

Cycle 92 class members made their affirmations on February 15, 1992. After writing all four affirmations, they signed and dated their papers, then filled out a “Record of Body Transformation” form. They copied their affirmations onto this form, precisely as written. This was followed by a description of the current condition addressed by each affirmation. A space was left blank for a description of each condition as of November 21, 1992, to be filled in at that time. The Record of Body Transformation forms were copied, with one copy going to the participant and one kept on file by the teachers.

On Saturday, November 21, the target date for the 1992 affirmations, all thirty-three participants who completed Cycle 92 filled out their Record of Body Transformation forms, describing the condition addressed by their affirmation as it was on that day. Then, comparing their present condition with what it had been on February 15, they rated the amount of positive change on a scale from 0 to 10. If, to use a simple physical example, a person affirmed he would reduce his waistline by two inches and ended up reducing it by only one inch, he would give himself a rating of 5. Some affirmations, however, did not lend themselves to such purely objective

measures. We spent considerable time over three class sessions preparing participants to rate all affirmations with integrity, avoiding either positive or negative bias. Comparing the participants' ratings with our own measurements and other observations, we concluded that they were as reliable as any self-ratings could be, probably better than most of those that are commonly used in epidemiological studies. On the same day, participants also completed an ITP Adherence Questionnaire, their third that year, and an Evaluation Form. The Adherence Questionnaire was designed primarily to determine how faithfully participants had fulfilled their commitments to the class and to learn how their adherence to the program correlated with their success in realizing their affirmations.

The most striking finding involved the strong statistical correlation ($p = .0002$) between adherence to the program and progress toward realizing affirmations. This correlation jumped out at us, suggesting strongly that the people who followed the practice faithfully were likely to be the ones who successfully transformed body and being. The statistical analysis helped us evaluate our work, but it was the personal success stories that brought us the greatest insight.

To take one case, a thirty-nine-year-old psychologist made the following Affirmation Three: "My will is in tune with the Divine Will of the universe. There are no obstructions. All things flow to me and through me: love, health, wealth, success and creativity." As to her condition at the time she made the affirmation, she wrote, "I am frequently in conflict over my finances, writing ability and my relationships with [a former teacher]." At the end of the year, she wrote, "This has been my most startling result. My financial situation has tripled as a result of my not plotting how it would resolve. My most serious interpersonal conflict has completely resolved from its state...There has been an almost total shift in my attitude. From former attempts to 'make' things happen to an acceptance of whatever is presented and an acceptance of whatever I am feeling. I truly feel more flowing and internally without the former obstacles that caused me sadness. I no longer feel stuck."

The Story Continues

During the two and a half months between Cycle 92 and Cycle 93, we pondered the first year's lessons. We had reasons to believe we were on the right track, encouraged by the fact that those who most faithfully followed the program generally got the best results. We were also heartened by the participants' generally positive evaluations. In rating the elements of the program as to importance in enhancing their practice and value in their lives, participants gave top billing to the ITP Kata, the Leonard Energy Training (LET) exercises, the affirmations and the readings in *The Future of the Body*--all of which we considered basic to the project.

We decided to stick with the basics in 1993. Rather than trying to intensify the practice or to load the classes with exercises that yield immediate, sometimes spectacular results, we proceeded even more slowly and patiently than in 1992, making sure, for example, that everyone thoroughly understood the affirmation process before making their affirmations, even if that involved considerable repetition.

Once again, our deliberate pace occasioned a certain amount of grumbling. From the outset, we had espoused nonauthoritarian leadership and free expression, and our participants were, for the most part, mature professionals with no qualms about speaking out. (Thirteen participants from Cycle 92 continued through the Cycle 93 training.) Now a small but vocal minority began asking for an “Advanced ITP” or an “ITP II.” We listened and talked the matter over but essentially hewed to the idea of long-term, patient practice.

A Strong Finish

The ITP class was built on a vision of continuing human evolution including the possibility of dramatic transformations through long-term practice. Yet we grounded our most ambitious aspirations in the particulars of the body. For our 1993 trainings, seeking a purely objective measure, we replaced the “Exceptional” category for Affirmation Two with the most particular of measures: percent of body fat. The new Affirmation Two was the same for everybody: “My percent of body fat is significantly less than it was on March 27, 1993, and my lean body mass is equal to or greater than it was on March 27, 1993.”

We selected percent of body fat as a measure not only because we could get objective measurements but also because of the clear relationship between a low percentage of fat and overall good health. We were impressed by recent studies showing conclusively that maintaining or increasing muscle mass and reducing fat could increase vitality and delay or prevent many negative effects of aging, as well as reducing susceptibility to numerous diseases. In a time of rapidly rising health costs, this matter has serious socioeconomic implications. We made it clear to the class that we were interested in health not weight loss *per se*. We were aware of that peculiar set of mind that equates any desire for a healthy, well-toned body with “narcissism”—a vestige, perhaps, of an old puritanism, of our lingering denigration of the body. For us, there are many body types, all of them sacred. We consider the body a reflection of one’s essence, co-equal with mind, heart and soul. Its health and vitality is not a trivial matter.

To calculate before-and-after body fat percentages, an experienced physiologist, Terri Merritt, made skin-fold measurements for all participants on March 27, then again on November 13. The results were encouraging. Between March 27 and November 20, the percent body fat of the thirty class members dropped by an average of 12.60 percent. (As it turned out, the four teachers averaged exactly the same reduction: 12.60).

The results on the other three affirmations were also encouraging. Participants filled out two questionnaires during the 1993 Cycle. Results from the final questionnaires (November 20, 1993) were used for statistical analysis. Thirty participants finished the 1993 Cycle and completed the questionnaire. The average scores for progress made toward realizing affirmations, on a scale of 0 to 10, are presented here, as compared with scores from Cycle 92. (The Cycle 93 scores for Affirmation Two are not comparable. In 1992, as previously noted, Affirmation Two was “Exceptional” on a scale of 0 to 10. In 1993, it was percentage change in body fat. Also note that

the “Average of affirmations” is an average of all the individual figures not an average of the averages):

	Cycle 92	Cycle 93
Affirmation 1	5.67	6.30
Affirmation 2	4.30	-12.60%
Affirmation 3	4.53	6.67
Affirmation 4	6.58	8.30
Average of affirmations	5.30 (av. of all 4)	7.09 (av. of 1, 3, and 4)

In Appendix B (of *The Life We Are Given*), you’ll find a complete set of Cycle 93 statistics along with a detailed analysis. Here we’ll note only four points of interest:

1. Success on realizing Affirmation Four (“My entire body is balanced, vital and healthy”) was remarkably high and correlated to a statistically significant extent to participants’ adherence to every important aspect of Integral Transformative Practice.
2. Success on Affirmation Two (having to do with reduction of percent of body fat) correlated to a statistically significant degree only to the amount of aerobic exercise a week and class attendance. This doesn’t mean that factors such as diet and strength training were not important, but it does highlight the importance of aerobic exercise.
3. We found that consciousness, awareness and focused attention related strongly to success in achieving affirmations. For example, participants’ *awareness* of what they ate showed up as even more significant in their success in achieving affirmations than did *what* they ate.
4. Success for achieving Affirmation Three (“metanormal”) is even higher than that for Affirmation One (“normal”) and shows no statistically significant correlation to any adherence factor. This might be explained by the fact that the class members’ metanormal affirmations included many that were not objective and thus easier to rate incorrectly. But a close examination of the results as reflected in the participants’ prior and post states and behavior leads us to believe that this was not a major factor. The metanormal process, as we came to know it, often involved intentionality and what we might call grace, and was not always amenable to reductive explanation.

Even in the case of the purely objective affirmations, intentionality alone sometimes might have played a part. For example, one thirty-seven-year-old man reduced his percent of body fat from 11.1 to 8.3 (a 25.3 percent reduction) while making no change in his exercise regimen and actually falling prey to a craving for oil, consuming large amounts of french-fried potatoes over the last two months of Cycle 93. We couldn’t be sure that such dramatic bodily changes as his could be attributed solely to participation in the class and all that it entailed rather than to specific adherence factors. We suspected, however, that this was indeed the case. In the end, we were left with a healthy respect for long-term practice and for the power, and mystery, of the affirmation process.