

# A NEW EARTH ONLINE CLASS

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## COMPANION GUIDE

### CHAPTER 8

1. Read the ancient Sufi story on page 223 about the wise man who gave the king a ring inscribed with the words: “This, too, will pass.” Those words awakened in the king the awareness of the fleetingness of every situation and brought him the peace of detachment. *“Being detached does not mean that you cannot enjoy the good that the world has to offer. In fact, you enjoy it more. ... When you are detached, you gain a higher vantage point from which to view the events in your life instead of being trapped inside them. You become like an astronaut who sees the planet Earth surrounded by the vastness of space and realizes a paradoxical truth: The earth is precious and at the same time insignificant”* (p. 225). This week, try to gain a higher vantage point as you go about your activities. Feel the preciousness of this world, and at the same time view the events in your life as if you were observing them from the vastness of space, instead of being trapped inside them. What happens when you do this?

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2. There is a high price to pay for falling below thought through alcohol or drugs: Unconsciousness. *“Instead of rising above thought, you have fallen below it. A few more drinks, and you will have regressed to the vegetable realm. Space consciousness has little to do with being ‘spaced out.’ Both states are beyond thought. This they have in common”* (p. 229). Space consciousness is the next step in the evolution of human consciousness; alcohol and drug addiction are *“a regression to a stage we left behind eons ago”* (p. 229). This week, see if you can determine in your own consciousness the difference between being “spaced out” (through alcohol, drugs, watching television, daydreaming about the past or future, etc.) and the feeling you get when you rise above thought and experience your own inner space. Can you feel the difference?

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**3. “The average American, by the time he is sixty years old, will have spent fifteen years staring at the TV screen. In many other countries the figures are similar. ... Frequent and prolonged TV watching not only makes you unconscious, it also induces passivity and drains you of energy. Therefore, rather than watching at random, choose the programs you want to see. Whenever you remember to do so, feel the aliveness inside your body as you watch” (p. 230-233). Keep a running list of the TV shows you watch over the next few days. Then write them all here. Ask yourself if you are really interested in watching them. Put a check mark by the ones you really want to view, and do not tune in to the others. When you do watch TV, take some time-outs during the program to feel the aliveness in your body, to gaze around the room, to breathe deeply.**

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4. *"If you are not spending all of your waking life in discontent, worry, anxiety, depression, despair, or consumed by other negative states; if you are able to enjoy simple things like listening to the sound of the rain or the wind; if you can see the beauty of clouds moving across the sky or be alone at times without feeling lonely or needing the mental stimulus of entertainment; if you find yourself treating a complete stranger with heartfelt kindness without wanting anything from him or her...it means that a space has opened up, no matter how briefly, in the otherwise incessant stream of thinking that is the human mind"* (p. 234). This week, make a conscious effort to enjoy simple things, to be alone without filling the space with stimulus or to open your heart to whomever you meet. Be aware of a space opening up in you. Can you describe the subtle feelings that arise?

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5. *“The ego asks, How can I make this situation fulfill my needs or how can I get to some other situation that will fulfill my needs? Presence is a state of inner spaciousness. When you are present, you ask: How do I respond to the needs of this situation, of this moment?”* (p. 238). This week, choose a situation at work or home where you are struggling to find a solution. Write about it here. Then, stay alert, present, and open to “what is” when the situation arises again. *“When instead of reacting against a situation, you merge with it, the solution arises out of the situation itself. Actually, it is not you, the person, who is looking and listening, but the alert stillness itself. Then, if action is possible or necessary, you take action or rather right action happens through you”* (p. 238).

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6. See if you can detect within yourself these common ways in which people unconsciously try to emphasize their form-identity: demanding recognition for something you did and getting angry or upset if you don't get it; trying to get attention by talking about your problem; giving your opinion when nobody has asked for it and it makes no difference to the situation; being more concerned with how the other person sees you than with the other person; trying to make an impression on others through possessions, knowledge, good looks, status, physical strength and so on; taking things personally; making yourself right and others wrong; wanting to be seen or to appear important. Write a list of what you do to emphasize your form identity. Then conduct the following experiment. *"Find out what it feels like and what happens if you let go of that pattern. Just drop it and see what happens. ... Discover the enormous power that flows through you into the world when you stop emphasizing your form-identity"* (p. 255). Write your list here.

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**7. “It has been said: ‘Stillness is the language God speaks, and everything else is a bad translation.’ Stillness is really another word for space. ... You are never more essentially, more deeply, yourself than when you are still. When you are still, you are who you were before you temporarily assumed this physical and mental form called a person. You are also who you will be when the form dissolves. When you are still, you are who you are beyond your temporal existence: consciousness—unconditioned, formless, eternal” (p. 255-256). This week, make time in your schedule to be still. Even a few conscious moments of stillness can infuse your whole day with an awareness of inner space. Invite stillness in as you drive, as you wait in line, as you interact with your family, as you pause to answer the telephone. What differences can you perceive in your life as you bring more and more stillness into it?**