

Thirty Thousand Days

A JOURNAL FOR PURPOSEFUL LIVING



Attention Self-Reflection Morita Therapy Purposeful Action Naikan
Challenging Children Living Fully with Illness Gratitude

The Politics of What is Controllable

BY GREGG KRECH

One of the first things I learned when studying Morita Therapy was to examine what is controllable and what isn't. This examination wasn't based on theory, but on my own personal experience. Could I control *feeling* angry? No. Could I control hitting someone? Yes. Could I control *feeling* anxious? No. Could I control walking on to a stage in front of an audience and making a presentation to a room full of strangers? Yes.

My feelings were not directly controllable through willpower or

intellectual manipulation. What I could control in my experience, and in my life, was my behavior. My actions. My conduct toward others.

Years later, while teaching a course on Morita Therapy, I was reading an essay by the esteemed philosopher/psychologist, William James (1842-1910) who happened to be a contemporary of the psychiatrist, Shoma Morita. James stated,

"By regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not."

He went on to give an example . . .

"So to feel brave, act as if we were brave, use all our will to that end, and a courage-fit will very likely replace the fit of fear. Again, in order to feel kindly toward a person to whom we have been inimical, the only way is to more or less deliberately smile, to make sympathetic inquiries, and to force ourselves to say genial things. One hearty laugh together will bring enemies into a closer communion of heart than hours spent on both sides in inward wrestling with the mental demon of uncharitable feeling."

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"It's my support group for Zoom Fatigue Syndrome."

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**This has been a challenging
 time for most of us.
 Nobody knows what's
 going to happen.
 Uncertainty is the
 song of our time.
 Sing along. Stay in tune.**

The ToDo Institute's
*Online Certification
Training
in
Japanese Psychology*
September, 2020

The ToDo Institute has redesigned the certification process to allow people to begin the process online. For the past 30 years we have been offering a 9-day Residential Certification in Japanese Psychology here in Vermont. In light of the global health situation, we've decided not to offer a residential option this year.

However, we have designed a 3-day online pre-certification program for those who want to get started with the certification process. This online program, which we will offer through videoconferencing, will be conducted on the following dates:

**SEPTEMBER 19, 20 & 26, 2020
(MORNINGS ONLY)**

In addition, participants will have three individual consultations by phone or videoconferencing over a three-week period.

Those who have completed the 3-day online pre-certification program in 2020 will be eligible to participate in a follow-up 6-day residential program at the ToDo Institute in Vermont in 2021 or at a later time.

TEACHERS:

Gregg Krech, Linda Anderson Krech & Trudy Boyle

INFORMATION

<https://www.thirtythousanddays.org/residential-certification-program/>

to learn more about the ToDo Institute's Certification Program in Japanese Psychology.

Email us for further information or registration:
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Programs to change your life, not just your mind



*Finding Our Way in
a Time of Anxiety
and Uncertainty*

BY TRUDY BOYLE

Right now, is there anyone who isn't living with some aspect of anxiety, disappointment, fear, loneliness, or worry? How could it be otherwise? And is there anything one can do or say that will magically flip a switch and make it all go away?

Actually, we don't need that switch.

It is perfectly normal that during a raging pandemic, racial unrest, and a volatile economy we experience a great deal of anxiety, both for ourselves and the ones we know and love. If we add a compromised immune system and/or more than sixty years behind us, it is bound to make us a little jumpy. And if we live alone, jumpier still.

The problem is cumulative. We have so many unknowns and no clear path of action. So many decisions and so few leaders. How do we make some breathing room to reflect and not react? As all the *what-if's* play out, it is an easy slide into passivity.

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Breaking the Trance

BY LINDA ANDERSON KRECH

Many of us get into a trance-like state when we eat. We go a bit unconscious, driven by a habitual way of eating. Any efforts we make to tamper with our way of eating can be met by surprisingly strong resistance. But breaking the trance can be a real game-changer, when it comes to eating. Let's give it a go.

Some of the factors that feed the trance are **rhythm, pace, breath** and **attention**. You might start by changing the rhythm. Rather than eating like an automated machine — bite of this, bite of that, drink of this, back to that — interrupt that habitual and steady rhythm. Don't let it get any traction. The best way to control the rhythm of eating is to control your hands. Train them to relax while you are enjoying and chewing your food. Their job is to deliver food to your mouth, but until your mouth is empty again, there's nothing for them to do. In fact, don't let them make contact with your glass, your sandwich, your fork . . . Just put them in your lap, or on the table. They don't need to be in position for the next move because your leisurely and conscious meal doesn't call for that. These pauses will prevent the trance from gaining a foothold.

In terms of pace, there are two ways to slow things down. The first is to spend more time with each mouthful of food. At first this can interfere with your enjoyment of eating. It can be annoying and distracting to tamper with what seems to be your natural pace. But a slower pace can take the experience of eating to a very different place — one that helps you connect, not just with enhanced sensory delight but with a more spiritual awareness of what is happening. So end the rush, chew more thoroughly, and enjoy the

wondrous flavors and textures offered by each mouthful of food. Rather than chomping mindlessly, chew more slowly and carefully, as you might if you had a delicate tooth. Rather than rushing to swallow the food, experience its presence in your mouth a bit longer. These are the culminating moments, when your food gathering and preparation has come to fruition. Don't miss them because you are in a rush!

The other way to impact on pace is to linger between mouthfuls of food. Once you have swallowed, stay with the satisfaction of the moment before taking another bite. Pause and let the wonder of each mouthful fully register, before moving on. You may come to experience those moments as a particularly enjoyable part of the process.

And then there is the impact of breath, which nourishes you on a different level. Try taking one or two deliberate breaths in between bites. Breathing mindfully connects you to the present moment, which helps you to inhabit your body more fully. It broadens your awareness and staves off the trance.

And finally, keep your attention fresh. Feel the weight of your glass, examine the design of your silverware, smell the aromas of the food and distinguish the colors on your plate. Zoom in to the details of your meal, and zoom out to include the larger picture as well — the setting and context that you are embedded in. Take it all in, and give back a little smile, before taking your next bite.

Linda Anderson Krech, MSW, just conducted ToDo's newest program, Solving the Food Koan. Linda is a lover of vegetarian cuisine and Japanese Psychology and has a long-standing interest in eating with intention, awareness, and appreciation.





How We Look at Uncertainty

BY JOANNA MACY

If we take action only when we are reasonably sure of success, uncertainty can be paralyzing. In tackling climate change, for example, we can't be sure we haven't already passed a tipping point that sets us on track for a doomsday scenario. The sense that our world might be coming to an end is already leading many people to give up, to become cynical and drained of purpose. After all, what is the point of making an effort to improve things if we believe catastrophe is inevitable?

If we are not to be blocked by the part of us that wonders whether we're already too late, we need a different way of relating to the challenging uncertainties of our time. In Chris's addiction work, every year some clients he knew well died from their alcohol and drug use, while others grew stronger in their recovery. When he saw new clients, he never knew which way they would go. It was a good sign when they felt this same uncertainty too. If they were certain things would go well, there was a danger of

complacency. On the other hand, if they saw themselves as hopeless cases, their belief that a downward spiral was inevitable led them to give up, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Thank goodness for uncertainty. When we know the future isn't yet decided, there is room for us to play a role in influencing what happens. When we fall in love or start out in a career, can we be certain it will work out well? When contractions herald the birth of new life, is a safe delivery, or even the baby's survival, guaranteed? Life, in its richness and mystery, never offers guarantees of success. We don't let that stop us. Indeed, our awareness that the outcome is uncertain is what prompts us to prepare; it calls us to attention. Neither complacent optimism nor resigned pessimism has power to motivate us; they don't generate a hunger for learning or provoke our best response.

from Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (New World Library, 2012). All Rights Reserved.