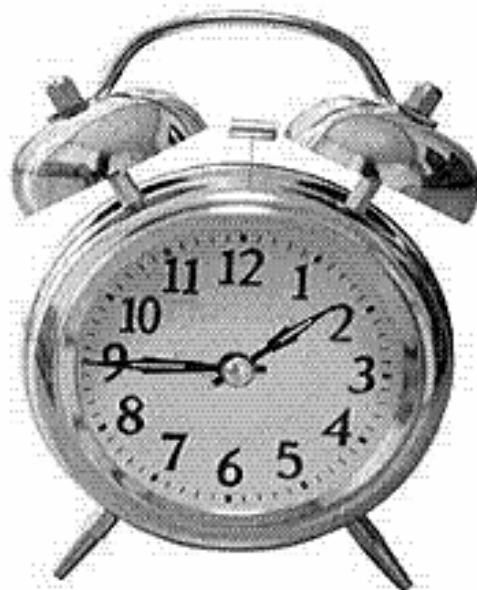


FREE

**“This Is Your *Monthly*
Wake Up Call Ezine”**



**Dedicated to Assisting You To Get The Most
Out Of Your Short Life,
In A Humorously Harsh and Effective Way**



An Ezine Sampler
from Aaron McNaught Education/Consultations

Welcome To *Your Monthly Wake Up Call*

Waking Up The World... One Sleeper At A Time

The Stick of Compassion

If you were to walk into a Zen Buddhist meditation hall or 'Zendo,' you may be shocked to see them engaged in an very old tradition called 'keisaku' (Japanese: kyosaku). Keisaku is a form of a 'compassionate wake up call' always administered at the request of the meditator. While the student is sitting in meditation or zazen, the teacher will, at their own discretion, strike the student on the shoulders with a long pole or stick. **Swwack!**

This loud and dramatic form of 'wake up call' may on the surface appear harsh or cruel, but the intention of the teacher is one of encouragement, alerting students to their mindlessness in their meditation. This reality check represents the teacher's sword of wisdom and the means to cut through delusion, or the world of thought, concept and interpretation.

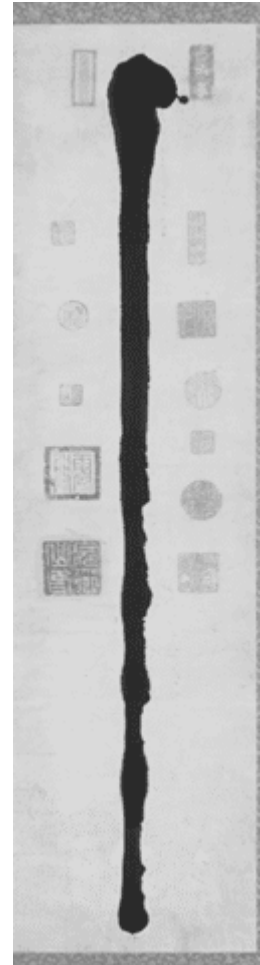
The moment you are struck, you are left with the bare actuality of that moment, the stark, naked, direct, non-conceptual experience of aliveness. No future and therefore no hope. No past and therefore, no 'self'. All that is left is the immediacy of awareness of aliveness as such.

May the words that follow serve as a 'keisaku' wake up stick, compassionately smacking you awake and alive, reminding you that your Life is now, while the past and future are but memories and dreams appearing in the sleeping mind.

Swwack!

If you open your mouth, that's a mistake.
Close your mouth!
~ Zen Master Seung Sahn

Swwack!
Swwack!
Swwack!



*** Please understand before proceeding that I am using the symbol of the Zen Stick of Compassion as purely a metaphor to represent the idea of the harsh, shocking, immediate and maybe even playful form of Wake Up Call that Life sometimes serves us, and that we are all familiar with.

I am in no way suggesting the use of violence, so if you can't get past this idea, this isn't the place for you.

I am also in no way promoting or affiliated with any religious or spiritual traditions. Period!

June 1 , 2007

From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Psst...
You Awake?

Welcome to **Issue 19** of your *Monthly Wake Up Call*.

That's 19 months of waking up the world, one sleeper at a time.

Each brief *Monthly Wake Up Call* is about one idea related to how we live our lives with diminished attention, the effects of living our lives that way, as well as suggestions on how we can work with our lives to wake up.

With no further adieu, let's go!

In this issue: The High Cost of A Busy Mind

Do you ever find that you have become agitated or anxious while alone, maybe while driving, at work or at home, and realize that there is nothing in your immediate experience that caused your agitation and anxiety except your thoughts?

Maybe you are thinking about 'what could/should have happened' or 'what does it mean?', or 'why did it happen'?

Maybe you are having a conversation or argument in your head with someone and your mind is playing both sides? (I always win arguments with my ex-wife when I am alone)

Or maybe you are second guessing yourself, scolding or berating yourself to the point of submission?

Three Big Ways You Pay

There are many ways that we pay for this kind of unnecessary mental activity, or as we are calling it here, a busy mind. Let's quickly look at three.

1. When we are lost in the busy mind the body reacts to our thoughts, which means when we are having thoughts that are negative or painful, the body reacts accordingly.

Agitation, anxiety, stress, depression, anger and apathy can be the result of having a mind that talk talk talks. I call this mental flagellation.

2. When we are lost in the busy mind we lose access to our deeper perspective, our maturity and our natural deep wisdom.

This is because we are functioning from the surface of the reactive mind, rather than from the depths of our heart and being.

3. When we are lost in the busy mind we are missing our real and true life that is happening beneath our chatty minds. This means that we are living a substitute life, rather than our real and true life that does not require thought. Our real life is happening in the silence and stillness that is deeper and far more true than anything our mind could ever say to us.

Do you think there is ANY chance that one day soon, maybe when you are close to your death, that you will say to yourself: "I wish I would have taken the time to ___?"

Smell the roses, watch a sunset, hug my kids, kiss my lover, look at the sky, open my heart, be kind

What To Do?

Learn to place and fix your attention in someplace OTHER THAN your mind/head.

I would suggest picking a place and sticking with it for at least a month. For example, you might use your breath, your belly, or your whole body. Then, when you have placed and fixed your attention, open your attention to include your whole experience, without thought.

With even brief, intermittent practice you will get great results.

This practice will counter the **Three Big Ways You Pay for The High Cost of A Busy Mind**, outlined above.

What's more, you will benefit in numerous other ways, outlined in my short article called **21 Benefits of Awakened Attention**.

Thanks and I hope we'll talk soon.

**Sincerely,
Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy**

* * * * *

July 1 , 2007

From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Hello and welcome to your **Monthly Wake Up Call**.

Naked is the way to live... if you're up to it...

Opps, I've gotten ahead of myself. Let me back up.

Happy Canada Day.!

Because it's such an auspicious day, I end this newsletter with a special invitation just for you. Prepare to be SWACKED with my verbal Keisaku (Zen stick of compassion).

With no further adieu, let's go!

In this issue: Everyday Life As Practice (or: Getting and Staying Naked)

Whether you like it or not, right this moment you are alive.

As you sit and read these words, you bring with you countless patterns of conditioning, programming and habit.

This means that your body/mind, because it has lived in a society, culture, family, and countless relationships, has been subjected to a variety of repetitive perspectives and experiences that have led you to form numerous patterns of thought, judgment, opinion and belief.

Me too.

But see, here's the thing: We can use our everyday Life as a practice to waking up beyond our countless patterns of conditioning, programming and habit.



**Pssst...
You Awake?**

This means we can practice returning to what is real in our lives, BEYOND our particular patterns of thought, judgment, opinion and belief.

Now, not everyone will be interested in this way of Life.

Why?

Well, I can guarantee that no one under the age of ten would be interested in this way of Life. That is because they are not mature enough to step outside of their own perspectives and see HOW they see.

One clear sign of maturity is the capacity to see that the reason we have a crappy point of view is because our lenses are covered in crap. To put it less offensively, it means we can take off our glasses to see that they are affecting how we are seeing.

More simply, it means we can hold our point of view (perspective) in front of us and look AT it rather than through it.

It's not that children don't want to do this, it's that they couldn't even if they did want to. They have not developed the capacity to do so, because they have not been alive long enough to mature to the point where it's possible.

Just as newborn babies can't yet walk, it's only a matter of time, natural unfolding and practice.

While I won't say that immaturity (lack of developmental unfolding) is the ONLY reason someone wouldn't be interested in the way of Life I am describing here, it is certainly the biggest reason.

Another big reason is that many people have not yet been exposed to the possibility of this way of Life.

This newsletter is exposing you to that possibility right now, as you read these very words.

Right now.

Lack of maturity and lack of opportunity are the two biggest reasons that many people are uninterested in the way of Life I am describing here.

So if you ARE interested in this way of Life, let me ask you this:

Can you look around from where you sit and see everything without thought, judgment, or opinion?

Can you see nakedly, without labeling, naming, or categorizing?

Can you just drop everything you have ever learned and see nakedly, simply and clearly?

Can you just BE naked?

I invite you to get naked and stay that way.

SEE nakedly, BE naked and STAY naked.

It's a beautiful way of Life

This is Everyday Life As Practice (or: Getting and Staying Naked)

SWACK!

**Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy**

August 1 , 2007

From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Pssst...
You Awake?

Welcome to **Issue 21** of your *Monthly Wake Up Call*.

That's 21 months of waking up the world, one sleeper at a time.

In this issue: **Becoming A Connoisseur of Life Wine**

With no messing around, let's go!

Becoming A Connoisseur of Life Wine

Almost anyone can drink wine and experience its taste.

Although you may not know what you are tasting, it takes zero skill to simply taste wine.

Put it in your yap and you might say "dry" or "sweet" or "strong" without any wine tasting training at all.

Big deal.

It takes only a little skill to know the basic difference between red wine or white wine. One sip with my eyes closed and even I can almost instantly determine 'white or red', even after only a few wine drinking years.

It takes considerable skill to determine the more refined aspects of wine tasting, such as geographic origin, producer, vintage, color, and many other factors that lay far beyond the untrained palette.

After years of training and refining ones capacity to taste the subtleties of any kind of wine, one may become a wine connoisseur.

A wine connoisseur would have developed a highly refined capacity to detect a full spectrum of sensory possibilities with even a small sip of wine. They can appreciate aspects of the wine tasting experience that are outside of the weekend wine lover.

The word 'connoisseur', comes from connoistre, connaître meaning "to be acquainted with", and is defined as: 1 : EXPERT; especially : one who understands the details, technique, or principles of an art and is competent to act as a critical judge.

"What the hell does this have to do with Waking Up" you might fairly ask?

Bear with me, because here's the analogy.

I am a connoisseur of the present moment.

After sixteen years of 'moment tasting', my ability to discriminate and detect the subtleties and nuances of the living moment are such that I am an expert.

I am highly 'acquainted with' what it is actually like to be alive as a body and mind.

That does NOT mean thinking about my experience. Rather, it means NOT thinking about it, but experiencing directly without thought.

It means plunging into my lived experience so fully and so attentively that little escapes my knowing.

So what's the big deal with that?

Well, here's the thing: Your Life is slipping past one sip at a time.

How much experience are you squeezing from the Wine of Life?

If you have not undergone Attention Training and have not developed a formal or informal practice that leads you to a Life of Awakened Attention, maybe you are like a wino, mindlessly guzzling Life Wine with no real appreciation or depth.

Maybe you gulp your Life Wine inattentively, carelessly, like a bored teenager who drinks wine for the end result of intoxication.

Or maybe you are like the multi-tasking housewife who drinks her Life Wine while distracted and fragmented, lost in activity like it's just another task.

With Attention Training you can mindfully sip your Life Wine and extract all the subtle pleasures and all of the sorrows, all the joys and all of the beauty that is Life.

Soon it will be over. What will it be for you?

SWACK!

Gratefully,
Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy

* * * * *

September 1 , 2007
From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Welcome to **Issue 22** of your **Monthly Wake Up Call**.

That's 22 months of waking up the world, one sleeper at a time.

In this issue: **Moving Beyond the 'Life As Teacher' Cliche'**.

With no messing around, let's go!

Moving Beyond the 'Life As Teacher' Cliche'.

Learning is seldom an event.

Other than very dramatic experiences such as learning that fire is 'hot' or ice is 'cold', little of what we learn in life comes as a result of one time experiences.

Most of our learning are processes, involving the repeated application of a skill/understanding, until that skill/understanding becomes second nature.

Once we reach a certain degree of mastery we are no longer involved in a learning process as much as simply applying our new skill/understanding in various ways.

We have learned 'good enough', and although improvement may continue over time it is no longer necessary to practice in order to be adequate to apply our new skill/understanding.

Learning to walk, learning the alphabet and learning to ride a bike are examples of such learning processes.



**Pssst...
You Awake?**

Other kinds of learning can be lifelong endeavors, where the practice of a skill/understanding is not an event or even a finite process, but a bottomless unfolding of deeper understandings, applications and expressions.

Arts and skills such as painting, dancing, singing, educating and lovemaking can be lifelong learning endeavors. Here, there is no real goal in mind. Instead, learning is seen as a deep exploration of a mystery without end.

That said, many people like to mouth the pithy phrase, "Life is my teacher", although it's obvious they are not even present as they speak those words.

What does it mean to say, "Life is my teacher?"

The way I see it, every moment is an opportunity to understand more deeply how Life works, what is really real, why things are as they are, and especially HOW things are.

Life drifts by, moment by moment, burgeoning with wisdom that remains secret to the untrained, inattentive eye.

Neglect, distraction, obsession, denial, avoidance, delusion, confusion...

These forms of inattention rob us of the one chance we have to see what our lives are really about.

Antonio Machado puts it: "What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?"

Once in bloom and now in seed, you imagine 'there is always next year'.
There isn't.

You imagine there will be a better time to pay attention to what is before you.
There won't be.

You imagine you will have another chance to care for what has been provided.
You won't.

You imagine your Life is more than one season long, but already the days are growing shorter. Autumn is coming, and with it your last chance to savor the colors of your Life Garden.

Please understand before it is too late. There's no going back.
Life is unfolding one moment at a time, with or without your attention.

All around you Life's Great Song, drifts upon the breezes,
As She dances slowly past, without a care for who She pleases.

SWACK!

Recommended reading: *A Year To Live* by Stephen Levine

In this book Stephen Levine performs a 1 year experiment using his whole Life as the lab.
Excellent practices and perspectives throughout.

Contact me with comments and criticisms.

Gratefully,
Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy

October 1 , 2007
From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Psst...
You Awake?

Welcome to **Issue 23** of your *Monthly Wake Up Call*.

That's 23 months of waking up the world, one sleeper at a time.

In this issue: **Reclaiming Your Non-Negotiables**

With no messing around, let's go!

Reclaiming Your Non-negotiables

How telling is it that we are a society of people who don't even know how to breathe?
Hello? At what more basic level could we possibly fail? ~ Jed McKenna

Breathing is a must. It is essential, necessary, imperative, fundamental.

Breathing is non-negotiable. You need it or you die. You also need a certain amount to function optimally. Too much or too little and you suffer, plain and simple.

There are only a few other 'can't-do-without' non-negotiables in life, including water, food, and sleep.

These non-negotiables are similar to breathing in that, if we don't get enough, we will quickly deteriorate and perish.

Everything Is For Sale For The Right Price

Knowing how important these non-negotiables are matters little.

Even though we know that we function optimally when these non-negotiables are met, we still live in ways that are detrimental and self-abusive.

We negotiate adequate breathing because of habits of closure and our fear of feeling.

We negotiate proper water intake because we forget or we are too busy doing nothing.

We negotiate optimal food intake because we are compulsive and empty.

We negotiate our sleep patterns because of our overbusy lives and overbusy minds.

In short, we negotiate our non-negotiables daily and even hourly.

Oxygen starved, dehydrated, over fed, and sleep deprived, we wonder "why do I feel so _____?"

What to do?

A Line In The Sand

Starting today, why not make an effort to reclaim your non-negotiables?

Try a daily half hour nap, a breathing practice, a water intake reminder, and a one day a week fast.

There are few actions that you can take immediately, that will greatly enhance your overall wellbeing like the four listed above.

Or conversely, if you want to see how bad you can feel, simply become more lax with your list of non-negotiables in an experiment to see how important they really are to your overall sense of well-being.

Try staying awake for several days, holding your breath, denying yourself water, and gorging yourself with cookies. (I'm kidding..., please don't do that. But if you do, please let me know how it goes for you.)

It Gets Worse

If you are reading this newsletter, you probably have a set of ideals, values, or virtues that you hold dear. I do.

For me there are three primary ones:

1. Fostering an ongoing connection to the Life that is (and I am).
2. Non-reactivity and detachment, fostering kindness, non-harming and compassion (not 'idiot-compassion')
3. Creating and maintaining a moment to moment connection to my deepest truths and greatest gifts to the world.

I would like to imagine that I live closely to these three values. I would even like to imagine they are also non-negotiable.

But let me put this as simply and as harshly as I can, just so we can get to the main thrust of this month's issue of Your Monthly Wake Up Call.

I know in my bones and blood that:

- * Life, all of Life, is ALWAYS happening right now, and NEVER otherwise.
- * Kindness and compassion are signs of wisdom and deep maturity.
- * We are either living from our deepest truths and gifts, or we are serving up a lesser, shallow version of ourselves.

But, there are times when I negotiate my deepest vision and live in a way that robs humanity of what I know to be true. So let's ask some questions together, to bring this to a head.

When is it appropriate to turn away from our real and true Life, which is always happening now, in favor of thought, memory, and imagination? When is it O.K. to sacrifice our one chance to live THIS moment?

When is kindness negotiable? Can we say, "I'll be kind, just as long as things go my way..."?

Is it O.K. to forget gratitude, and instead, live under the sway of a knee-jerk compulsion to satisfy our petty desires?

When is it ok to betray ourselves and the world by living from our lesser understandings and with-hold the gifts we long to share?

Does love become a bad idea, just because we are afraid, angry, hurt or confused?

What in your Life have you negotiated by making a secret and silent deal with yourself, trading your heart and soul for comfort, consolation, and complacency?

What happened? What are you going to do about it?

SWACK!

Please email me with your three non-negotiables that you plan to reclaim, starting today.

Gratefully,
Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy

November 1 , 2007

From the desk of Aaron McNaught:

Pssst...
You Awake?

Welcome to **Issue 24** of your *Monthly Wake Up Call*.

That's 24 months of waking up the world, one sleeper at a time.

In this issue: A Play of Color and Light

With no messing around, let's go!

A Play of Color and Light

We are to a large degree creatures of habit, conditioning and circumstance.

Over the course of my Life and due to many circumstances and situations beyond control, I have established particular patterns of reactivity such as anger and fear, as well as patterns of occasional empathy and friendliness.

I am often intense and dark, periodically humble and gentle.

These particular patterns have served to give me my particular and unique personality or, 'color', if you will. I am now accountable for how this particular color is presented and expressed to the world.

To take this analogy further, as an individual I am a unique color of Life.

That unique color is illuminated by the one Light of Life.

There are infinite colors, but only one Light.

I am exactly the same as you as the one Light, but also infinitely different from you as a unique color. This unique color that I am is a product of chance and is for the most part, beyond my control. (Imagine a melted box of crayons.)

The one Light that I am is also beyond my control.

When this understanding arises, a new perspective arises with it. The perspective is this: in any given moment, I can relax my identity and open as the one Light of Life that I am, or I can lose myself as the unique color of Life that I am.

If I contract as a particular color, then my identity takes the shape and form of my patterns, limits, and fears. My identity and therefore my happiness and suffering becomes dependent upon the conditions that surround me and that I mistakenly use to define me. I become identified with the patterns of behavior and thought that have resulted from all that has happened in my Life. My identity is based upon conditions, and therefore my happiness and sense of freedom is always conditional.

If I open as the one Light that I am, my identity is without pattern or condition.

If I open as the one Light that I am, I become, in a sense, the colorless open space and Light in which all patterns and conditions appear, reside briefly, and disappear.

My identity is without condition, and therefore my happiness and sense of freedom is condition-less.

Nothing I have ever done, felt, or experienced makes any difference to the one Light that I am.

When you identify as the one Light of Life, that light grows stronger. As that one Light of Life grows stronger, your unique color also becomes intensely magnified as that one Light of Life shines AS you.

You become the expression of color and Light that you truly ARE, rather than a faded or half-lit shade of a dreary color obscured by fear and contraction.

We are all a play of color and Light.

At times we are uniquely colored.

At times we are the Light of Life.

And sometimes, in the moments of our greatest truth, we become a play of such vibrant color and intense Light that we simultaneously express our full humanity and our full Being-ness as human beings.

Color and Light, humanity and being-ness, inter-woven into a brilliant rainbow of Life.

Not sometime in the future, but right here and now.

May we all remember and shine as the Light of Life, illuminating our truest and most brilliant colors as a gift to the world.

SWACK!

Gratefully,
Aaron McNaught
A.K.A. The Wake Up Guy

Sign Up For Your *Monthly Wake Up Call* at www.wakinguptolife.com

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Author ~ Speaker ~ Life Coach ~ Consultant

Blending transformative experiential practices, Life enriching perspectives, and stories of his own journey from a place of darkness and despair, Aaron's presentations are an amazing combination of inspiration, information, instruction and entertainment.

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