

How to Live

I would like to express myself.

I am excited by life, but I think my problem is that I activate and de-activate too quickly. Like I can turn it off too easily. People don't always appreciate that. But at the same time I can also engage and create a lot of joy for myself. I am capable of that. And also spontaneity and fun. I'm super fun to be around when I want to be.

When people tune in to that they really open themselves up to me. For example, I talk to homeless people all the time. This guy on the train yesterday was on this jag about how he wanted to just fuck people up, so I just asked him *What's that about? Why do you want to do that?* I've gotten very good at de-escalating situations. I'm not physically large. In fact, I look pretty young and innocent, so I'm not threatening, but I also don't back away from difficulty. I've got a real psychological presence. Once you key into what someone's after, there's a few tricks to get what you want out of them. More to come on that.

This guy calmed down really quick, and then he's asking me if I'm marshmallow. Ha! That's his word. Are you marshmallow? Okay. Yes, yes, I am, sure. So we talked for awhile about just life and how hard it can be, and then he says 'I don't have any fingers,' and he held up his hand and showed me. That kind of stuff happens to me all the time. We've all got our things (or not!), you know. None of us are really that different from each other. It's important to recognize that. Like I always say: start from where you are.

So, the question is simple. You have to ask yourself: What do I need? And then here's the real tough one: Why am I not already giving that to myself? See? It's all about how you treat yourself, because that's how you invite others to treat you. It's not valuing yourself. If you're not valuing yourself, then why would anybody else?

You might see a lot of people that look pretty happy in their lives. You see that they have things that would make you happy, and it gets pretty understandable that you would have fantasies of bad things happening to them. That's just human nature, and probably a sign of a healthy ego. They have what you want after all. If they stopped breathing for some reason, someone's going to have a shot at their stuff.

For now, I just want to stop feeling like everything is about to come crumbling down. I want to feel like I'm working toward something bigger. What I want is a vision that sets that in action. To give you an example: My apartment is a mess. I've lived there four years and its always a mess, but even though I want it to be clean, I still don't do anything about it, and I can't figure it out. I find myself wanting to just let go of the apartment and





start all over again. Let someone else clean that up, and I'll start again somewhere else. But I know myself well enough that I would just do the same thing all over again and end up in another mess. Right now there are dishes sitting in my sink that have been there for six days. I could do them, but where does that get me?

But at some point you've got to make some choices. You can only do so many things in your life. Right now, I'm trying to get centered. But I've realized that I'm just doing all the things I *should* be doing—I'm doing what other people want me to do. I'm not doing what I want, and it engenders a sense of resentment toward others, and then in turn I resent myself for being resentful.

It's interesting. Look, I carry this amulet around with me everywhere. I bought it in Mexico. It's got a lot of cool stuff on it. I wonder what it all means. To me, it's symbolic of my self acceptance which I try to practice every day. Before I really understood, my understanding of self acceptance used to be resignation. If you eliminate everything from your life, then you would be free. I thought, from a place of nothing, then I could create anything. That's another thing people didn't understand: why I was always trying to get to that place of nothing.

For sure you can really go down a whole rabbit hole with it, and at a certain point it will become a matter of me talking about how I think the world should be, and then it's not just about self-acceptance, it's just acceptance of the whole thing, of everyone, and that's just not a tenable possibility right now.

But now I know that I'm the kind of person that needs to have a thing they're passionate about, that they can



lose themselves in completely. If I ever find that thing, then I'll just ride it and let whatever happens happen. And I'm not just waiting for that thing—I'm getting myself ready. Some people don't respect the preparation necessary for acceptance. It's an unconscious resistance. And then they don't recognize that good thing when it's right there in front of them. Me, I'll be ready. I am preparing for an absolutely powerful future.

You do have to feel like you've earned it though. Really, if life isn't hard, then what are you doing? It's like, you choose the thing you suffer for, right? You ascribe nobility to the suffering and then hold onto it in order to validate your choice to suffer. That's the beautiful struggle. You take on a beautiful suffering—a suffering of your choosing. It just makes sense: if you follow the thing you're passionate about, you're going to suffer. That's how you know you're on the right path. Passion requires suffering. It's part of it. You've got to have some acceptance of that. Got to be okay with the pain. The suffering tells you you're doing something right. It's how we evolve.

But, wow, in the world we live in you don't really have to go far to suffer. You know what I mean? It's right there. All the time. It's right there. Suffering for you, suffering for others. To experience the suffering of others is a deep Buddhist thing, and it can be the most beautiful thing in the world to share in that experience. To be compassionate and connected to the experiences of everyone around you. Just look around. Okay, and when you're done looking around, guess what, look right in the mirror. You want to know who's suffering? You are.

You can get that suffering from yourself. I've always had a deep sense of sympathy for my own suffering.

You can get that, but you have to listen in a certain way. It doesn't come right away. Over time I have learned to listen in a less transactional way and to incorporate more of myself into the world. That's tricky though, because I know there are things I manifest in the world that others see as part of me, but that are not really me. I mean, I'm fundamentally an open, thoughtful, nice, caring, kind person. But people don't always see that. I mean, I know myself, and I'm not who they think I am.

And I know that because I am my own best friend. You have to be. Who else is going to give so much to you? Everybody else is dealing with their own mess. It's not a bad thing though. I see it as a collaboration with myself. Or maybe it's more like I'm my own coach. Say it, I say! Say it to yourself right now. *I love you. I love you. I love you.* And then just stop and feel the gift you've given yourself. It's the most beautiful thing there is.

I call it radical sympathy. It's a connection between yourself and the world. Everything depends on you, and it is all under your power. You can make the world the world you want to live in. But remember this too: You do not know what's going to happen. That's tricky, but you really have to get that. Moment to moment just about anything you can think of could throw itself at your feet. There is no event that is not a possible answer to the question of *what's next?* Who is to say that in the next moment you won't be just a completely new person?

A lot of days I'll spend the whole thing in that state of mind. I try to look at everything around me with just su-

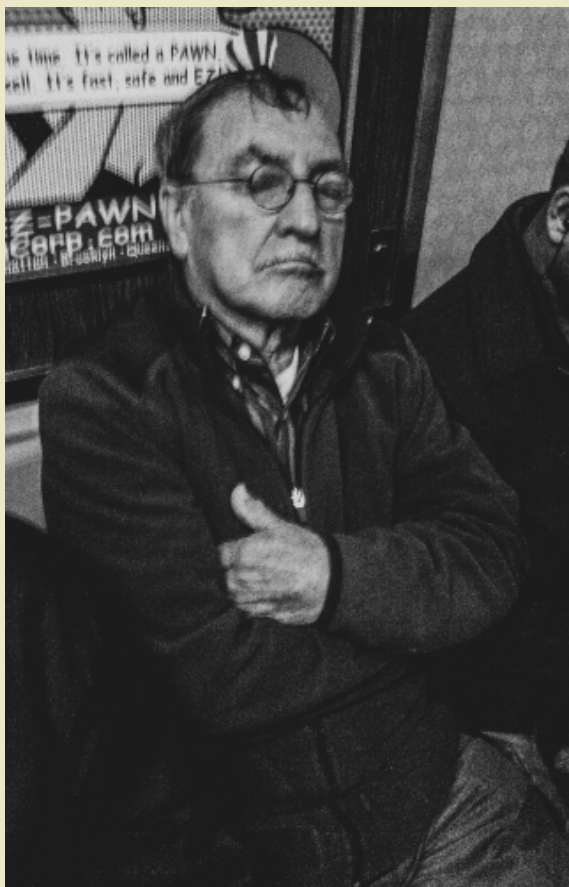


preme openness. That's the sympathy. You never know where it's going to come from and you need to be ready. And if you get that, if you really get it, it's not a scary thing; it's the most beautiful thing there is—the beautiful unknown. Because what you do know is that *something* is going to happen. Our lives are stories. Every one of us is writing their own story. And what's a story? It's stuff happening. Wait all day if you have to. Just sit there and try not to do anything at all—all day just sit and wait for it. Believe me: everything is about to change! Nothing will ever be the same again, and it's about to happen right now all the time.

But what happens with me is I get caught up in a cycle and then pull out of everything. For example, I spent like the last six months withdrawn from people physically and emotionally. I didn't go out. I didn't go anywhere. I just sat in my room in the dark flipping through my phone. In a way, I was giving myself my own private retreat, like a religious person working through prayer beads in their sanctum. It was very Zen, or Buddhist. I'm not sure. And seemingly it had no explicit negative outcome on my life.

Part of my problem, I'd be there, but I wouldn't allow myself to feel the emotions. If you're not careful there can be a false sense of participation. I just wouldn't shut off the spigot long enough to create the distance I needed to heal. My emotions could be triggered by anything, and I'd end up just trying to protect myself. Not wanting to get hurt. Trying not to absorb other people's difficulties. Because if you let them in, then theirs are going to be yours too. As a particularly sensitive person the chal-





lenge is to give yourself the right things, to let the right things in.

That requires a lot of love, and the tricky thing there is you've got to remember that you can't love someone else without loving yourself first. That's a problem I have: I'm afraid to hurt people.

And that's tough in romantic relationships. I try to be available. Like with Allison, I was trying so hard I was projecting something onto situations that weren't really there. I didn't know how to navigate that, and then there was a sense of forcing something. On top of that, I'm just naturally very boundaryless. I'm just a really open person. I used to celebrate that. But then sometimes other people weren't like that, and I'd be like 'Oh, you need to go? Well, who the fuck are you?' Some people don't know what to do when you completely open yourself up to them.

She was the type of person where you go to her apartment and there would be zero furniture and she'd sit on the floor, and you'd be like what the fuck? Who lives like that? It's always just weird that other people never seem to change in the way they need to.

But when things started to go bad just a little bit it all got going in the wrong direction. I would get triggered. And in the middle of the meltdown I would be thinking of the fact that I was the reason for the meltdown. And then I had a sense of guilt and shame about that, and I would need time to recover in order to go back to the relationship as my best self because that's the only way it was going to work.

But you have to remember that your job is to love, not to take care. If you're taking care of them, you're probably hurting them. So, it means not taking care because there is a really good chance you're doing that only to make yourself feel good. If I love you, then I'm going to let you be you, and sometimes that means that we're not going to be in the same place. Maybe you'll be in a bad place, and I'll be in a good place. Really, all we're doing when we do things for other people is telling them what we want. It comes from a place of scarcity and deprivation. There might be a sense of guilt to it, like you're not good enough for that kind of love, but that's okay—it shouldn't be effortless. Remember—suffering.

But there's a secret to it: The thing is to walk away not in an evasive way, but in an empowering way. You have to say I love myself enough right now that if you're hurt by how much I love myself, then I can't do anything about that. It all comes down to self-sovereignty.

She ended it like this: she said, "it's not going to work out." Do you know what that means because I don't. That's not good enough, but that's all I got.

Sometimes, you know, I have this image of the future and in it the whole thing is just me saying to her, "I don't know where I am right now, but I know I wouldn't have gotten here without you." Maybe someday I'll say that to someone.

Any time things go bad like that there are two parts to it: there is a desire to heal the injuries, and then also to use that to create something new from the healing. Our energy comes from our broken parts. But you have to realize that you have to make these things happen for

yourself. If you're unhappy, it's really your own fault. You must manifest your desires into reality. It's not going to happen if you don't make it happen. You have to ask for the change you want.

When I say *ask*, I mean you've got to say it out loud. You must intone it. If you want something bad enough you must be willing to put it out there to make it real. Then you've got a chance for something in the universe to hear it, for something to respond to it. There's no way those vocal vibrations do not have some effect. They may careen off just the right set of surfaces to disturb someone, something in just the right way. People think disturbance is bad, but I don't—you need it. When something happens I just say 'interesting' to myself, quizzical like. I look at it and I smile at it, and I just let it be whatever it wants to be. That's the only way you're going to get where you want go.

What I say to people over and over again when they ask why I always talk about myself, I say it almost like a mantra: you've got to put it out there so it's no longer yours. If it's just out in the world, then anybody can take it. It's a gift you give.

Our connections to people are real: we have ionic bonds with people that bounce off and affect each other, and then we have prevalent bonds when we share things with others. It's the way they are induced that gives us how we feel about things. I have a friend who's going through a terrible time, and it's hard to tell her that what she can't see is that she's divorcing herself from herself. I don't know how to explain that to her.



Over time I have learned to accept the power I have in the world, the power I have over others. People often don't realize their effect on others. If you study people like I do, you see these things. When people say they want to give back, I have to stop them and say you're probably already giving back right now. It's kind of a mind fuck. They don't realize the effect they're already having on the world just being themselves. Then they have an idea of what's it's all about.

That's a good example of how I see myself as a teacher. But my main student is myself. That's something you have to be careful with though. Sometimes I feel like I've stopped practicing my own life. Like I'm just teaching it to myself.

Do you know about bamboo? The thing about bamboo is that it grows surrounded by water. And if you pull the water away, if you wick it away somehow, that bamboo is either going to not be strong or it will wither and die. It needs constant support. You can't cut the water. You see, if the reservoir is empty—right—you will suffer and your body will tell you. It will tell you it needs something. You can't survive without the water. What's the water? Life is. Experience is the water. Life brings the water back. It's like you have to feed yourself, like making your bed every day.

I had this with a therapist. I would get really angry that she was trying to stop the session. So I'd just keep talking because I didn't like the fact that she was only giving me 45 minutes, even though that's what the deal was. Then next time, I'd just walk in, sit down on the couch. and as per usual she wasn't saying anything. Not even hello. She was waiting on me, and I knew she was



waiting on me ,and she knew I knew, but she seemed pretty happy to just let that go on. Eventually, I just burst out, *How can you can not engage with me when I'm right here? It's me! It's me!* There's a need for acknowledgement and a certain level of respect you have to demand.

I have a story about that. I was at this thing once with a few friends and there was this guy there, tall, very friendly. We were the only two that didn't know each other, and my friends were all saying that no matter where he went women just gravitated to him immediately. He didn't say anything to that but just smiled, not arrogant but like he agreed. Soon enough a woman approaches us, just on her own walks over and she says hi to him and then starts talking to all of us and it turned out she wasn't interested in the one I didn't know. She was into one my friends.

What I really remember about that night though was in a moment she kind of considered me, looked at me. We hadn't been talking at all, and she said, "You need to make yourself known." People say things like that. It got to me then. I don't think I said anything to her. Maybe my friend defended me a little or maybe no one else heard it and she just looked away. I felt a buckle in my knee, but I caught myself. If I'd had the tools I have now I would have got past it pretty quick. But in any case, that was a long time ago. I don't think she'd say that now. A lot's changed since then.

I almost forgot to mention gratitude. Remember that one.