



**FIFTH KOAN
INNER JOURNAL
EXERCISE**



INTRO: These small inner journal pieces are collection of fragments, ideas, images woven together from a variety of sources. These notebooks are containers for inspiration and reflection that the reader can draw from- a catalyst for exploration and creative imagination. The material has images to open the timeless wisdom of intelligence and can be thought of as sparks for visioning, pointers, way finders for the inner journey.

This small vessel is a tool for creativity in that it encourages inner journaling and reflects one's relationship to word, narratives, image and a transpersonal self.



ONCE UPON A TIME I ASKED MYSELF
WHAT REGRETS STILL SEEM TO HAVE A
HOLD ON ME

The five regrets and fifth regret KOAN

These five regrets can be thought of hybrid –Koans borrowed to engage consciousness sans the formal rigor of an audience with a Zen Roshi. The human condition gets into stages of grasping and unfulfilled desires. Our relationship to these inquiries can act as pointers for what we move towards or away from.

A palliative nurse who has counseled the dying in their last days has revealed the most common regrets we have at the end of our lives. And among the top, from men in particular, is 'I wish I hadn't worked so hard'. This is psychosocial cultural regret which has a variety of beliefs embedded into our work ethic.

Bronnie Ware is an Australian nurse who spent several years working in palliative care, caring for patients in the last 12 weeks of their lives. Ware writes of the phenomenal clarity of vision that people gain at the end of their lives, and how we might learn from their wisdom. "When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently," she says, "common themes surfaced again and again."

Here are the top five regrets of the dying, as witnessed by Ware:

- 1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.**

"This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honored even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. Health brings a freedom very few realize, until they no longer have it."

- 2.**

2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.

"This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret, but as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence."

3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.

"Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result."

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

"Often they would not truly realize the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying."

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

"This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content. When deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again."

Bronnie Ware recorded their dying epiphanies in a blog called [Inspiration and Chai](#), which gathered so much attention that she put her observations into a book called *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*.

THE FIFTH REGRET "KOAN"

What's your greatest regret so far, and what will you set out to achieve or change before you die knowing that we are all in stages of dying daily?

EXERCISE

The essence of this exercise is simply to give birth to life's sacred chapters in journal form.

Ira Progoff, At a Journal Workshop

I used to lie awake wondering what the human race would do if all its sacred scriptures were destroyed. Finally one night the answer was given to me. It came as a simple practical statement spoken in everyday tones. We would, the voice said, simply draw new spiritual scriptures from the same great source out of which the old ones came. In that moment I became aware of how vast and self-replenishing are the resources of the human spirit.

The fires of Hitler could burn the sacred books, but they could not destroy the abiding depths out of which those scriptures had emerged. I heard also the words of the Polish rabbi chanting as he was being buried alive: "Green grass lives longer than Nebuchadnezzar." God's smallest creations will outlast the power of tyrants. And this is because, as Walt Whitman knew, the simple leaves of grass come from the same infinite, recreative source as the depths of the human spirit, from which the wisdom and the strength of civilization also come.

That understanding opened a new range of hope for me. Humankind would not be destroyed. No matter what foolish, destructive acts people would perpetuate on the physical level, new fountains of life would continue to rise from reservoirs deep within.

Recognizing that there are indeed infinite dimensions to our universe, the immortality of life began to be a fact for me. Soon another realization arose in me. If humankind has the power to draw additional spiritual scriptures out of the depth of itself why do we have to wait for a tyrant to burn our Bibles before we let ourselves create further expressions of the spirit? If it is indeed true that each human soul contains a Bible within itself, may it not be that each person contains the possibility of new spiritual events and awareness taking place in his and her own experience? Perhaps there are new Bibles, many new Bibles, to be created as the sign of spiritual unfoldment among many persons in the modern era. It may indeed be that the creation of multiple spiritual scriptures, and especially the extension of old scriptures, is an event that needs to happen in our time as part of the further qualitative evolution of our species.

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that, if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Reflection and inner journal exercise the fifth Koan invites you in!

NOT TO WORRY

How can we cultivate an
untroubled mind?
What is equanimity

Quite often, we like one person, and dislike another. Don't think like this. Liking is an act of greed. Not to like, an act of anger. And not caring about all the average people of the world, an act of ignorance. We reject all three of these. When we have a heart absent of greed, anger and ignorance, then we have loving kindness, compassion and joy; we wish for all living beings to become Buddhas. This is good equanimity. Treat liking and disliking in our heart the same way. Can you do this?

Question: Since liking is an act of greed, disliking an act of anger, and ignoring an act of ignorance, how can we cultivate an untroubled mind?

Answer: When we confront living beings, and understand their suffering; when we consider the causes of their suffering and vow to stop it; when we think like a Buddha or a Bodhisattva; this is most important. To think like the average person just won't work. We must think like a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Right now when we grasp to the self (nga rgyal, bdag tu 'dzin pa) it is not possible. But as we gradually decrease and lighten that grasping to self, then we cause our hearts to expand. Greed, anger, and ignorance are the cause of our suffering.

This is what Shakyamuni Buddha said, and so this is how we also wish to reflect.



a third messenger offering:

The third messenger shares the messages
of compassionate service brought forth
from the great wisdom teachings and
teachers .

*The Third Messenger is taken from the
informational flow of energy as in
biological packets relaying intelligence to
living systems. Third Messenger is a
metaphor for creative intelligence found
in deep guided imagery and inner
journaling as a means to cross the
territory of the unfamiliar landscapes into
one's healing journeys.*

see also

guidedimagerycollective.org

nadazul.org