

## Playin' Old Tapes?

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Most of us are kept from actualizing true personal freedom by a series of internal and external "conversations," many of which take place outside of our full awareness. For example, when we are with a friend, a family member or co-worker, how often do we hold an internal image of that person during a conversation? While we may be discussing plans or seeking solutions on the surface, we are also having a dialog in our heads with ourselves; "Jane is so much like her mother," or "Jim has never respected me." The situations may change, but we continue to bring a "mindset" to our interactions that can disable us in really being present both for ourselves and to the reality of the conversation!

Life experience conditions us to make assessments and judgements and many times we unconsciously bring these judgements into new situations. Appropriately or inappropriately, these mindsets put us on a path, one that often leads to keeping us stuck, preoccupied with preset notions, rather than being truly present in and the moment. Often these "tapes" that play unbidden in our head live in our subconscious and we are not even aware we are bringing a judgement into the conversation. Some of these are useful, keeping us safe through hard won experience, (once burned is twice shy) and they aid us both in our interactions with others, and in attaining access to our complete and whole selves (nothing ventured, nothing gained). But other tapes may have outworn their usefulness. These hold us hostage to an incomplete truth or outworn notion. These keep us from being fully present and accessing our true nature. Here are some "tapes" that may keep you from being who you really are:

**1. I'm the victim:** For centuries, suffering has

## 10 Road-Blocks to Personal Freedom

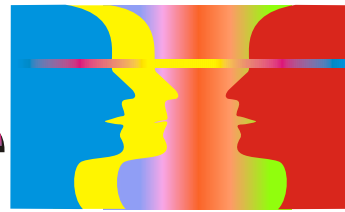
dominated much of our experience and the image of being a "victim" can permeate our interactions and paths. In our struggle to break free from the psychological chains of bondage, including our reactions to life, lies the possibility for a reawakening of our ability to sense and experience our true selves. Approaching the conversation as the victim, even unconsciously, can create a self-fulfilling prophecy. The pay off may be being "right" but, the downside is in remaining the victim.

**2. Get it done, now!:** Doing creates meaning. In the culture of America, we pride ourselves on completing everything on our to-do lists. The messages we receive from all areas of daily life lead us to believe that the more we get done, the better we are for our efficiency and effectiveness. Doing becomes life's mantra. Still, no amount of activity can satisfy what life is really asking from us. There is a rush from doing, and checking items from that list may become how we measure ourselves, and assess our value. We live in a culture of measuring, but are these cultural standards reflective of your personal satisfaction?

**3. The big talker:** Talking about it is the same as doing it. Talking, talking, talking and nothing happens, right? Are people neither listening nor respecting your communications? If you are not really listening, or communicating from a real place, other may see you as just talking. Our personal power occurs when we create conversations that forge relationship, possibility and action. When we're able to make connections to other human beings we're able to create a new way of relating to them. In so doing, we expand our world.

**4. No control, no power, right?:** We seek fulfillment from of our lives and design strategies on how to go about getting "it." It may be the symbols of power the culture deems as representative of success; the new car, the big house, the fancy connections. Once we secure "it" we'll be satisfied, right? Not necessarily! True power emanates from having a connection with others, rather than over them. Striving to gain a sense of control, often in ignorance as to

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# Cat Naps

I'm fast asleep in the barber's chair when the sultry sounds of the Temptation's 1965 hit, "My Girl," drifts into my slumber. The intro guitar riff with that single finger-popping beat, thumps through the two wallet-sized speakers of the CD player on top of the 'fridge. Even after four decades, those timeless lyrics, the rhythmic instrumentation and the tight harmonies, nudge me from a semi-conscious state.

Voices in the background spoil my nap, cutting through the insect-like buzz of the barber's clippers. I can't say just what ignited the shop patrons, but somebody has posed the question, "Why do blacks act like cats; seeming to show a lack of collective will when it comes to influencing their economic, political, social and psychological well-being?" Now that question shakes me from my cat nap! It was as if a rhetorical time bomb had just nuked the barbershop and every thing in it, right down to the stripes on the barber's pole.

From the most commonly voiced arguments, such as: white man's meddling, blighted socioeconomic conditions, absence of role models, abandoned inner cities, preponderance of drugs, epidemic AIDS cases, single family households, and unforgiving street life, I was soon engulfed in a whirlwind of commentary, like a Hannerty and Combs talk-show.

It was hard to disagree with any completely, and all contained some degree of merit. After all, this is the barbershop, and a black one at that; all reasonable points of view will be taken under consideration, even some slippery ones. In this kind of heated exchange, passions often overrule reason. Even those patrons with a well thought out argument can be swayed by an undertow of compassion or a silver-tongued orator. In the lounges of the black barbershop, anything is fair play.



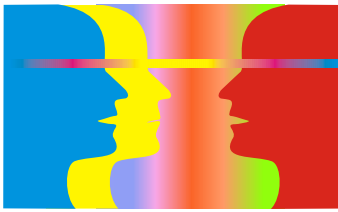
Still half dozing, my body sagging deep in the comfort of the chair, I'm blown away by how often the obvious seems to take a torpedo to the hull. I listen with eyes closed as one after another steel-clad argument bobs above the surface only to slip into the murky depths below. So often the compelling will trump sensible and the complex is traded for sexy. Yet, the simplest argument makes the most sense, doesn't it? Follow a premise to its logical conclusion and you'll have your evidence trail. After all other possibilities have been eliminated, that which remains is what's plausible, right?

So, after most (if not all) the verbal combatants have offered their version of the truth to this heated exchange, I offer up mine. Half asleep though I am, it's clear to me why blacks behave like cats, singular and independent, when it comes to organizing for their community's well being. The root of the problem is plain there are just too many hairstyles and too few Afros! Case closed!

Yeah laugh, let it all out as you watch me sleeping there; a bit of dribble streaming down my bottom lip, just above my chin. Let all your giggles escape, like air from a bottle of Saturday night bubbly. But before you dismiss the premise, consider that at no time during recent history, or at least over the last half-century, have you witnessed one symbol that so united a community as much as the ol' Afro.

The Afro represented the ultimate icon of protest. Afro picks and Sta-Sof-Fro conditioner doubled as rocket fuel to launch a community's destiny. Certainly, in relatively modern history, it's one of the few times when blacks behaved more like a tightly organized flock of geese, answering that instinctive call to fly south in October, than lone felines.

With all of the hairstyles available today it's nearly impossible to amass a collective choice for a community. Black's possess a virtual Cheesecake Factory menu of hairstyles, including the likes of:



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dreds, twists, braids, baldheads, curly, jheri curls, fades and so many more. It would take a periodical table of hairstyle elements to reflect the range of how our identities get expressed through hair follicles.

Today's styles represent the singular expressions of who we are as individuals. These new looks serve to punctuate, not align, differences running as deep as the platforms between Democrats and Republicans. This rainbow of hairstyles could be said to be divisive, just as Delilah's shears sapped Sampson's strength. To galvanize a community, shouldn't we start by getting everybody's hair to look like an Afro? Otherwise, it would be like trying to drill a platoon into cadence with all the cadets out of uniform! That just doesn't bode well for troop cohesiveness. That's more like a parade!

With the passing of the Afro, our community no longer appears to have the collective will of the geese. It is more like the singular, hunting nature of the leopard; living a life of solitude, seeking safety in the trees, far above the pack animals below. Yeah, yeah, I know it sounds far fetched. And perhaps, I have been watching too much National Geographic, but remember, this is the barbershop.

My barber draws his clippers back from my hairline, not a moment before carving his initials into my scalp. For an instant, shop patrons chuckle as they eyeball me slipping in and out of consciousness. I straighten myself from the chair recesses, crack a slight smile, and scratch my head, like a patient recovering from anesthesia. Wait a minute, now. Can it really be? You mean all the time I was making this great case I was still asleep? Shucks, it sounded good to me.

I slip back into the lullaby of the clipper's buzz, longing for the lost opportunity to make my case for the Afro. It would have been a purr-fect argument. In the background, the Temptations are still crooning, so let me get back to that last bar in the song ... something about "having sunshine on a cloudy day." Yeah, yeah, that's it, that's it!

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Whether we long for the good ol' days – recall an "oldies but goodies" tune, fantasize the way it use to be in our youth – embrace a symbol from the past, or project the way it should be now, doesn't make it so.

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the why of how we feel out of control, can entrap us in a never ending quest for power, actually keeping you powerless.

**5. Now that I've got it ...:** 80 percent of the workforce hates their jobs! They may have millions, influence, and all the toys that go with their titles, but they hate their lives. Striving only for the trappings of satisfaction can keep you stuck on a merry-go-round. You may not find satisfaction in work, but worse yet, you now need to work to support all the fixtures and illusions of faux-satisfaction. Are you denying your true calling?

**6. Greener on the other side:** We spend an inordinate amount time chasing what the culture calls fortune rather than embracing what the universe calls us to do. Rather than looking for satisfaction in ever greener pastures, another path may be seeking "what is life asking of me?" Still more inviting, "What is life asking through me?"

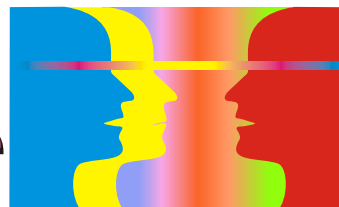
**7. Been here, and done this too:** Already knowing how a thing will turn out can be the greatest enemy to being present. It suggests that you already have the all answers and stifles your ability to learn something new. Curiosity offers an antidote to this conversational mindset. Rather than bringing this judgement into your conversation, take a moment to be still and release the judgement. The only constant is change. Create a space that allows someone to be as they really are, right then, as opposed to who you think you are.

**8. Here cometh the judge:** American culture doles out heavy dosages of judgments and evaluations. We live in a world that is often filled with what something or somebody "should" be, rather than what is the reality. To achieve a balanced perspective, accept what's already there without the filter of something being wrong.

**9. Worshipping false ones:** Our world consists of managing images. We don masks to cloak our real selves, often to conceal the fear that our false self will be found out. Once these images can be released, we can live out in the open, as one with our essence.

**10. The best defense is offensive:** Suffering can be a dominant theme in our conversations. Much of our lives as humans is spent in a defensive posture. As much time as we spend defending our hidden "wounds," we also spend an equal amount in not

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Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
 And sorry I could not travel both  
 And be one traveler, long I stood  
 And looked down one as far as I could  
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;  
 Then took the other, just as fair,  
 And having perhaps the better claim,  
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
 Though as for that the passing there  
 Had worn them really about the same,  
 And both that morning equally lay  
 In leaves no step had trodden black.  
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
 I doubted if I should ever come back.  
 I shall be telling this with a sigh  
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
 Two roads diverged in a wood and I -  
 I took the one less traveled by,  
 And that has made all the difference.

by Robert Frost

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acknowledging or naming those wounds. In consequence, maintaining your "game face" may keep you in the line up, but the internal pain is never healed. When hiding and denying painful realities, we are too busy protecting and projecting that pain to cure the causes.

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Whether at work, at play, or in life, love, total acceptance, is often the missing ingredient in our lives and our conversations. A life of love means finding joy in every interaction with the world; from washing the dishes, to greeting the tow truck driver who fixes your flat

tire, or in making amends with a long lost relative. The presence of love is acceptance and in its absence is fear.

By taking a detour from the paths our mindsets and tapes would dictate, we can find a way of living outside of the distortions that both our personal and American culture tells us is good and bad, right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable and more. To become one with our true selves, sooner or later, we will have to choose the path that leads to personal freedom.

## Cat Naps

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Longings leave us incomplete, living in the past and hungering for something unavailable to us at this very moment. Yet, knowing our longings and their impact on our decisions and choices - particularly those we live with everyday - can clear a pathway from the idealized place; from the lost love, from the unfinished business and from much more that keeps us from living in the present moment. Once these longings are uncovered, we can awaken to the wholeness we seek in our lives.

### 30-Day Practice - Longing

In exploring your personal sense of longing for a past life, experiment with the following questions:

1. What longing from my past shows up repeatedly in the present?
2. What does my mind say?
3. What does my heart speak?

4. What does my Hara (belly energy center) signal?
5. What am I learning?
6. What new actions will I take?

*If you find the practice questions of interest, and would like to explore your questions on "longing and nostalgia" further, I invite you to take a personality style inventory on my web site at <http://www.dwhconsulting.com> under "survey" on the navigation bar.*

*E-mail the results to me at [darryl@dwhconsulting.com](mailto:darryl@dwhconsulting.com) and indicate your wishes to schedule a complimentary 15-minute consultation on the results of this test and/or your own perceptions, defined through the questions and practices, and I will contact you.*

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*For Information on the topics in this newsletter, or to arrange for training or speakers in the areas it discusses, please contact at us:*

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