

# Enlightenment Traps

## How Not to Get Enlightened

by Robert Sniadach

What is enlightenment?

Can't really say what it is, only what it is like. And what it is not. One can describe the effects, the feeling of it, the daily reality of living it.

Enlightenment:

- The Light coming on; darkness gone.
- Direct knowing occurs; ignorance gone.
- Simple awareness exists; illusion gone.
- Unbroken wholeness is; separateness gone.
- A profound experience of having awakened, as if you have been sleeping all along and didn't know it. This new consciousness state does continue to evolve in its own way, but it does not disappear; it is not temporary.
- All sense of, and desire to continue seeking for answers completely ceases. All questioning stops. You now have your answer. You live it.
- The voices inside your head disappear permanently. You no longer hear any inner judging of your thoughts or actions; no inner punishment for your choices; no more 'shoulds' or 'should nots.' Your consciousness is merged with the flow of a greater consciousness which has *everything* under control. You flow with it, automatically.
- Doubt no longer occurs about anything. Your next step, next action, next 'choice' is automatic.
- A million other free side-effects, such as inability to worry, inability to attach excessive importance to anything, no undue concern about results or goals, continual present moment awareness and activity, zero regret about the past and no fear about the future, profound relaxation of the body, greatly improved well being, automatic ease with anyone at any time, and many more.

Do you want to be enlightened? Sounds pretty good, huh?

Well, where can you get it? How can you get it? Who can give it to you? What must you do to get it?

To achieve enlightenment, there are hundreds, maybe thousands of systems, practices, theories, disciplines, and rituals prescribed by an unending stream of gurus, masters, priests and shamans. All claim that they have got it, and that their method is your answer, guaranteed to make you enlightened. With all of this wisdom offered and all of these instruction manuals floating around, you'd assume that enlightenment was happening left and right, with millions of enlightened people walking around the planet, creating a Garden of Eden on Earth.

A quick glance around, however, shows you that it just ain't happening.

Why not?

Very Good Question. Seems that either the wisdom offered is faulty, the manuals are not exactly correct, the practices are not quite accurate, or the practitioners themselves are not really doing what they say they are doing.

The sobering truth is that there is no one and no thing, no practice and no knowledge that will give you enlightenment. It happens when it happens; you cannot force it, no matter how hard you try.

And yet, everyone seeking spiritual enlightenment is trying to get it through some person, some thing, or some practice. Usually all three.

Of all those trying very hard to get it, the failure rate is right about 100%.

How can this be? With so many people, trying so hard, for so long, over thousands of years, surely someone has figured out how to get it, right?

Short answer – No.

Since no one has figured out how to get it, the next best thing we can do is to examine what has failed over and over again. Perhaps we can learn something from that.

So, what are some practices that do **not** produce enlightenment?

### **Meditation does not produce enlightenment**

Meditating for hours every day does not bring you enlightenment. No matter which style of meditation you practice or how much you practice it, it will not produce enlightenment.

Meditation is an excellent practice to relax your body, balance your breathing and calm your mind, at least a little bit. Consistent meditation practice will slowly give you insight into the mechanics of how your mind works: how thoughts are produced, where they come from and how they function. Regular meditation gives you a foundation for weathering the storms that come up now and then in your life, which is very helpful. Also you may come to understand the difference between biological thought (necessary) and psychological thought (superfluous). These insights are indeed quite helpful and provocative. They are not, however, a goal in themselves.

Marathon meditations may produce captivating altered states of consciousness and strange sensations in your body. These may be pleasant or painful, profound or just weird. All these experiences come and they go, which should immediately tell you something very important to your quest.

All of these things are fascinating to experience and explore. But they have nothing directly to do with enlightenment and do not bring one any closer to it. At best meditation improves your overall health and well being to some degree, and that is a very good thing. However, from the getting-enlightened point of view, meditation keeps you idling in place, if not actively taking you further from it.

### **Chanting does not generate enlightenment**

Toning, chanting, devotional singing, repeating a mantra, drumming, free-form dancing or speaking in tongues does not produce enlightenment, or move you closer to it. To the degree you believe that, they are taking you further from it.

These practices are lots of fun! They can produce sublime states of consciousness and even more strange and delightful sensations in your body. You can have feelings of being tuned in to a bigger flow of life, feelings of connection and rhythmic unity with All That Is. You get into the Groove and it is a blast. Awesome!

Then, in an hour or two, the regular old you is back, along with your regular old reality.

Right at that moment when you fall back into regular old reality, it is likely that you will try to talk yourself into believing that you are “making progress” towards lasting unity and permanent bliss. But... you are not.

Use these practices for having fun and for experiencing very cool altered states of consciousness. But don't fool yourself into believing that they are transporting you to enlightenment.

### **Religious practice does not dispense enlightenment**

Dozens, maybe hundreds of religious belief systems are on display for the avid shopper at the Religion Super Market. You can pick and choose from a wide assortment of beliefs, involving one god or many gods, the universe within or the universe without.

You may choose to worship saints or devils, mother nature or heavenly father, stars, constellations, archetypes, gurus, priests, statues, paintings, animals, philosophies, theories, your belly button, your heart, your third eye, sex, your body or the body of someone

else.

Highly Esteemed Tradition based upon Ancient Teachings by various Prophets and Messiahs may be your calling. There are a few well-worn religions that have many centuries of thinking, elaboration, tinkering and fine-tuning included in their history. All believers and followers greatly revere sacred books that contain many layers of translations and mistranslations of special words and chat sessions from a guy who lived way back when.

Very specific practices and rituals are prescribed, others are forbidden, and diligent practice is mandatory if one is to progress up the ladder to final salvation. Lifetimes can be spent mastering all the details and intricacies. At the end of it all you may find yourself to be quite learned, pious, saintly, compassionate and kind. A highly evolved human being!

Enlightenment, however, is in the other direction.

### **Special diets and lifestyles do not stimulate enlightenment**

There are countless diets advocated, physical exercises recommended, purification rituals encouraged, endurance trainings demanded and rejuvenation elixirs prescribed in order to help you to become the perfect vessel to receive and embody the highest secret teachings. Only by achieving the utmost fitness and purity can you become a Light Body: one who is now worthy of being a Holy Person.

These physical states of being are indeed wonderful, and the blissful feelings of energy and aliveness are their magnificent rewards. But, like every other experience, they are temporary and fleeting. To try to maintain them permanently will keep all of your attention and efforts completely involved in them. Seeking body perfection is not seeking enlightenment. Seeking body perfection is seeking body perfection. Enlightenment does not require it.

That said, is there merit to having a high level of health? Sure, why not?! If you are going to live on this planet, you might as well have the health to fully enjoy it. But you must be careful where you place your energy and focus. You *can* study and learn that your physical body has definite and specific biological needs that can be provided for in definite and specific ways. Then you can supply those needs in a most direct and simple manner. It's easy.

As you might expect for you and for most people, pretty much everything you currently believe in and do, to and for your body to get it healthy and keep it healthy - is wrong. Or, at best, what you are doing is far more complicated and difficult than it needs to be. Most people have beliefs, lifestyles and dietary habits that do not provide for their simple biological needs in the most appropriate, positive and natural manner. Learn the basics about your body and how to feed and care for it and it will give you many years of trouble-free operation. An excellent bargain!

Anything above and beyond this, however, is missing the boat. If enlightenment is what you want, then your body should be kept in good condition - enough to keep your mind sharp and focused, and your desire strong and focused. Do not get distracted by detouring all your attention into total purification of the body, ultra-fitness of the body, perfect health of the body, immortality of the body, or other perfection of the body.

Remember: you must die. Your body will return to dust. All body perfection practices have absolutely nothing to do with enlightenment. Get your body and mind into good shape by learning and doing the things necessary to get it there - simply and easily - and then don't give the subject any more concern.

### **Practicing Tantra does not climax as enlightenment**

Sexual desire, sexual activity and sexual orgasms are intensely powerful experiences. You can pretend to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, metrosexual, anti-sexual, celibate or androgenous. Perhaps you are involved in sex with a partner or sex with yourself; group sex, casual sex, or sex only to make a baby. Sex can be gentle and loving, or rough and mean... or a little of both. There is no end to the variety of sexual experience available to you.

Every critter, from amoeba to zebra, seeks to reproduce. To insure that happens, the urge to merge is built into the most primitive parts of the brain, and a mighty powerful urge it is. Going as far as killing another in order to copulate is no problem for many species.

And the actual release of sexual tension – orgasm – is likewise an extremely powerful altered state of consciousness. Pleasure beyond measure.

Sexual activity can simultaneously connect us to our most primal instincts and to a most sublime transcendental awareness. So, naturally, someone thought to themselves, “Why not conjure this to be a sacred practice that will catapult one to enlightenment?”

Along came the rules, regulations, correct acceptable practices, incorrect forbidden practices (which eventually became acceptable), and tantric masters who come from long lineages stretching back before written history. The tantric melody has captured countless eager disciples who show up with an erotic gleam in their eyes, ready to get to work.

There is no doubt that sexual activity can and does launch you right out of your mind, and for most people, going out of their mind is a wonderful thing. Normally most minds are so full of stress, anxiety and conflicted crap that silencing it, even for only a few minutes, feels reeee-ally good. The experience of a silenced, blissed-out mind, coupled with a wonderfully relaxed body from orgasmically spent sexual desire is right near the top of the list of peak human experiences. And not only is it free of charge, but it is also available at any time!

The enlightenment angle falls along the lines of working with sexuality to try to keep the blissed out mind thing happening as long as possible, “letting go” as completely as possible, and delaying as long as possible, or eliminating altogether the actual ejaculation of orgasm (if you are male). If you are female, riding continuous waves of orgasmic delight for hours on end sounds about right. If you get good enough at all of this, maybe, just maybe you can get yourself so maxed out in pleasure for so long enough that the silenced mind and abandoned ego can sort of flip over (out?) into permanent bliss.

Perhaps you are beginning to catch my drift and can see the child-like fantasy of it all...

Focusing your mind, sensations and awareness ever more carefully on the feelings and states of consciousness that sex can provide will give you pleasure you can scarcely imagine. It is wonderful and beautiful. Enjoy it.

If you want enlightenment, you have other work to do.

### **Acquiring special powers and knowledge, or seeking them out in others does not dispose you toward enlightenment**

Whether having special powers or inquiring of others who have them, these sources will not help you toward enlightenment. If you have the ability to see the future, find hidden objects, channel the presence of discarnate entities, penetrate the hidden meanings of esoteric knowledge, read the thoughts of others, manifest objects, control your dreams, exude charisma, hypnotize crowds, make other people nervous and make lovers swoon, then you may indeed be quite special and talented. But not enlightened.

And even if you are just a regular guy or gal seeking answers to the biggest questions of Life, you will get no lasting help from psychics, astrologers, numerologists, tarot readers, prophets, priests, channelers, gurus or wise men. Indeed, the most helpful thing they can do for you is to hasten the day that you finally get irritated enough with all of them that you finally stop asking them for help.

### **Aspiring to, or arriving at 'holy' status is not related to enlightenment**

Are you seeking sainthood, guruhood, priesthood, pundithood, any other 'hood, or highly evolved state? Then you need more and more knowledge, more and more practice, more and more wisdom, more and more questions answered, more and more discipline, more and more purification, etc., etc., etc.

All of these things are wonderful, of course, and highly treasured for their benefits. Supposedly, once perfected enough, whatever 'enough' actually is, then you get to be a

high-ranking member of the 'hood of your choice.

It is graduation day, and now everyone can help you prepare for your grand initiation ceremony, where you get to wear the cool new outfit. Now you are the Guru, the Master, the Swami, the Avatar, the Learned One, His Holiness, Her Highness. Such a high status!

And such high responsibility. Now you've got standards to uphold, appearances to maintain, rituals to preserve, lineages to honor and statues to revere. It's all quite detailed and involved. Rules and regulations and traditions and disciplines and meetings and speeches and teachings, and, and...

Does that sound free and liberating?

### **“Doing Nothing and Pretending I Am Already Enlightened” will not get you enlightened**

This is a recent fad: “You are already enlightened and there is nothing you need to do!! Every one of us is already enlightened... we just do not realize it. So all you have got to do is... nothing at all! Just realize it already. Just understand. Just believe. Just have faith. You are already enlightened. Stop everything and enjoy it right now.”

Cool! Just *beee-leeeeeve*... and so it is. Amen.

Many people, actually every single person, believes all kinds of things. Some believe in their beliefs really, really, really strongly.

And it can work! Try it for yourself. Pick out something to believe about yourself... for example, “I believe that I will become very wealthy, a millionaire, loved and admired by everyone.”

Now keep thinking that thought every day, many times a day. Affirm out loud to yourself as often as you can, “I am a millionaire!” Study about millionaires and how they achieved it. Find some of them and ask them how they did it. Attend more seminars, read more books, watch more instructional videos. Put it all into practice every single day, and never stop your affirmations.

Then comes that morning when you add up your bank account, your investment portfolio and the stash under your mattress, and viola! Your net worth is now \$1,000,003! A very satisfied smile creeps across your face.

Now that you see how it works, simply apply the same technique for enlightenment: “I am enlightened!” Read about it, study about it, ask about it and practice it every moment of every day. Reframe all your old experiences and every new experience to fit into your new belief system that says, I am enlightened!

That's it. You are done. Right?

Well?

Mmm Hmm.....

Nothing to do anymore, so you can just sit here grooving on your new-found enlightenment. Whenever any random thoughts pop up about enlightenment, such as, "Is this really all there is to it?" ... or, "How should I act now that I am enlightened?" ... or, "I don't really feel very enlightened, so how am I supposed to feel?" ... or, "Nothing seems any different than it was yesterday, so maybe something must be wrong here...?"

Be honest. It's just another belief, just like all the other ones you've carried around your entire life. You swap the “I am enlightened” belief for the previous belief which was, “I am a seeker of enlightenment.”

Inside your mind you secretly know that this is not it. Time to grow up and move on.

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### **Add**

Looks to me like all of these approaches to spirituality and enlightenment are all about attempting to perfect the ego by **adding** new beliefs and knowledge to it. And to lock it all in, you must practice again and again and again, habituating your ego to act in preferred new ways. You are trying to erase old habitual mental grooves and replace them with new and improved habitual mental grooves; new beliefs to replace the old beliefs. New identity

to replace the old identity. New morality, new rules, new 'shoulds and should nots' to replace the old ones. In the end you've still got beliefs, rules and morality, and these are the very things that obscure reality, generating illusion.

What are beliefs? Beliefs are untested assumptions, unproven opinions, unverified points of view. Beliefs are not true, they are only hoped to be true. Indeed, they are actually false, temporary mental constructs, with no certain truth to them whatsoever. Like pixie dust, they appear, they dazzle, they get believed in and then they fade away, eventually. Remember Santa Claus?

You can easily verify this for yourself: Are the beliefs you hold today the same beliefs you held 1 year ago... 3 years ago... 10 years ago... 20 years ago... 50 years ago? If those old beliefs you had were that flimsy and impermanent, why do you believe that your new ones are any better? What will you believe 10 years from now? And most importantly, how will you know that your new beliefs are true, or not?

Do you seek Truth? Or do you just seek new and more exciting beliefs to replace the old ones when you get tired of them?

Do you *need* beliefs to survive? Can you live without belief?

Since your beliefs are not really known to be true, only desperately believed to be true, you can never have total trust in them; you never have completely solid footing with them. To deal with this nagging unsure feeling deep down inside, you command yourself to pretend very, very strongly that your beliefs are true... and when you do that, you feel better. Your **faith** has been restored! Do that long enough and hard enough and eventually you'll cement your beliefs in place permanently. You'll make yourself literally incapable of believing otherwise; now you are willing to die for your beliefs.

Notice: your perceptions and your beliefs **are** you. What you believe in is what makes you you; your beliefs are how you define yourself. They are your identity. *They* are who you are.

Male, female, black, white, yellow, brown.

Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Muslim, Jew, Athiest, Agnostic.

Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Greenie, Socialist, Anarchist.

Doctor, teacher, plumber, farmer, scientist, athlete.

Meditator, vegetarian, eco-crusader, animal rights activist.

Smoker, drinker, gambler, Anonymous member.

Rich, poor, player, pretender.

Hip, cool, nerd, dimwit.

Bum, hillbilly, sophisticate, oddball.

If someone challenges your identity, or challenges your beliefs (i.e. challenges you), you must defend yourself, and the only reason you need to defend your identity and beliefs is because you have strong attachments to them.

Attachments are beliefs with **very** strong emotions tied to them. Emotional energy keeps your beliefs alive, thereby keeping your ego alive, which keeps you alive. This is your script; this is the role you play, every day. Everyone you see around you is expending nearly all their life energy keeping their beliefs energized, acted out and defended every moment of every day.

Phew! Exhausting.

Everyone keeping their egos alive, wearing their costumes, playing their roles, completely in character. Each person completely believes in their own character and script; everyone believes each others' character and script is real, and the Grand Illusion is complete. Everyone validating and reinforcing each others' pretend reality.

This being so, if one **really** wants to break out of this incredible, wonderful and bizarre Game we are all playing, the answer is not to add to the character, not to add to the script. Not to add more beliefs, knowledge, practices, purity, or anything else.

## **Subtract**

The answer is to **subtract**. Subtract everything. Subtract, remove, burn away, jettison,

detoxify, get rid of, eradicate, disintegrate and eliminate both the character and the script, and *all the beliefs that created them*. As this happens, falling away one by one, all the emotional circuits tied to them will release their pent-up energy and flow out of your body. You will literally feel this happening within you. It is an amazing process – extremely challenging, unstoppable, and, in the end, extremely liberating. Once you are free of these encumbrances, you shall see clearly, and come to live an ongoing life of clarity: Vida Clara.

Bottom line: You do not try to get enlightened. Instead, you examine and strip away everything you carry around that creates illusion within you. Once you are done with that, enlightening awareness is what remains.

How does this happen?

### **Do It**

Use your mind ruthlessly, like an ultra-sharp knife, to slice and dice every single belief you hold to be true. Challenge every single opinion and assumption that makes you who you think you are. Challenge what you call yourself - doctor, teacher, athlete, artist; catholic, protestant, muslim, jew; believer agnostic, athiest - and the assigned, believed and accepted roles you play as these characters.

Why do you play them? Whose rules are you following anyway? Does following the rules that other people demand of you make you feel good inside?

Challenge your secret cherished beliefs about the kind of person you believe you really are. Think you are a nice guy, a sweet gal? Think you are smart and beautiful? Think you are ugly and sickly; wild and crazy; cultured, refined, or obnoxious? Who says so? Who told you these things? Who sold you on these opinions? How did you sell yourself?

Do you look into the mirror and tell yourself these things? Why do you believe it? Why do other people and their opinions matter? Why does *your* opinion matter? Your opinion is based on what... a belief? Where did you come up with all of this?

### **Peeled Away**

Take away your name, your career, your relationships, your bank account and your credit cards. What is left? Who are you without these identifiers?

Let's take it to the limit. Imagine you've just gotten bonked on the head real hard and now have total amnesia - you don't remember *anything* about your past. Now here you are, a week later, a healthy functioning grown human being with a big bump on your head and zero past history. No name, no job, no address, no identity, no nothing. Don't know who you are, what you are, where you are, when you are, why you are or how you are.

Nevertheless, you survive. Here you are. What do you know for sure?

You know you exist.

Now what? What remains? Who *am* I? What, exactly, is this thing called *me*?

The ultimate and intimately personal enlightening realization, when it comes, is your final answer.

### **On Good Authority**

Enlightenment requires no knowledge, requires no practices, requires no beliefs. It only requires ridding yourself of that which obscures clear perception, that which blocks clear seeing. As you continue to challenge yourself, soon you will start to see how you create your filters, you create your illusions, you create your beliefs about who you are. Subtract all beliefs (falseness) and truth will remain.

Enlightenment is utterly and completely about asking yourself your own questions and getting your own answers, for yourself, by yourself. You **must** be your own authority in all things spiritual. Rely on no one else. There is no other way. Every other approach is a side track; every religious figure and guru a dead end.

*“The faith that stands on authority is not faith.”*

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Accepting answers from anyone else makes you lazy. Doing so will only weaken your own ability to find your own answers. Cast aside all books, beliefs, theories, scholars, priests, gurus and deities and find your own answers from within you. You - your mind and your desire - are all you need for this journey; no one else and nothing else whatsoever is required.

*“Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it.*

*Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true.”*

– Buddha

If Mr. Buddha did it, Mr. Jesus did it, Mr. Krishna did it, Mr. Emerson did it, Mr Maharshi did it, and all the other unknown enlightened ones throughout the ages did it... then you can do it.

Sharpen your blade. Lock and load. Saddle up, jump on your horse and ride. Ride straight and ride hard. Keep going. Further. Stop for nothing and never look back.

You literally cannot imagine what awaits you.