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to Focus
Your Attention

Self Test:
What's Important
to You Right Now?

Healing
Through Writing

Whatever Happened
to Justice?



Channel Surfing Through Life?

Channel surfing one evening a few years ago, I happened upon PBS's Charlie Rose interviewing Michael Eisner, the chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company. As I recall, their exchange went something like this: "Tell me about the night *The Lion King* opened on Broadway," said Rose to Eisner. "It's been a huge success as a movie, and now it's not only a commercial hit but also an artistic triumph on the stage. That night must have been incredibly satisfying."

The mogul shook his head. "Not really. If you're in a job like mine — and you'll find the same thing if you talk with anybody in my position — on any given day there's always something coming up you need to worry about." So, yes, it was a huge moment. But I got the sense that Eisner had missed it. He was living in the future, beset with other problems.

Then I clicked the remote and came upon the final few minutes of a network documentary about cancer survivors and their families. A man whose wife's life-threatening cancer had recently gone into remission spoke about the current state of their lives. "Suppose you were on Flight 800, and the bomb went off," he said. "Somehow you survived, and you knew you had only a few minutes until the plane went down. I think you'd live those moments with an absolute clarity about what's important to you. You'd focus on those things. That's how my wife and I try to live every day we have together."

That juxtaposition of those two ways of being in the world goes to the very heart of this issue's special section, "Your Attention, Please!" (page 28). For many of us, the message of 9/11 was that life is fragile, and that every moment is a thing to be treasured. But that idea, however much it may sound like a message from Hallmark that many would affirm, is profoundly counter-cultural.

Our ancestors had ten thousand years to adjust to the invention of the wheel before any significant new inventions came along. Today our entire body of knowledge doubles every decade. With the rate of change only increasing, many of us feel we're channel surfing through life — often with somebody else at the remote. The cost of that distraction is not only higher stress and lower satisfaction, but the feeling that we're squandering life itself. Some experts even claim that we live in an "attention economy," where the truly scarce — and most valuable — commodity is our frazzled ability to concentrate.



So what do we do? Our goal at the magazine is to provide a wide lens to examine the challenges and possibilities of our lives. We draw insights from a variety of people, traditions, and sciences because

each has something to tell us. At the heart of the magazine are the practices that enable us to experience life more deeply and to be better connected with ourselves, our communities, and the divine.

B. Alan Wallace is a leading teacher of contemplative practice. His exercises for "Refining the Attention" (page 30) are not only proven, they can be done wherever you are — even while walking down the street. In "Writing Myself Back to Life," Nancy G. Shapiro relates how she learned the healing art of paying attention to her own life, and how any of us may follow her example. Of course, it's easier to pay attention to the things we really care about. Matthew Cross's application of the Japanese practice of *Hoshin* provides a tool to help us sort the wheat from the chaff (page 42).

So if this issue arrived in your mailbox as another piece of information vying for your attention, please know that our intention is just the opposite. We aim to give you the tools you need in order to reclaim your most precious gift: this very moment. The time to begin is now.

Robert Owens Scott

Robert Owens Scott, Editor-in-Chief

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212-602-0705

Editor-in-Chief

Robert Owens Scott

Editor

Stephen Kiesling

Contributing Editors

Anne Foerst, Sam Keen

Media and Web Editors

Frederic A. Brussat, Mary Ann Brussat

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Daniel Yankelovich, The Public Agenda Foundation

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MANAGING YOUR LIFE

By Stephen Kiesling

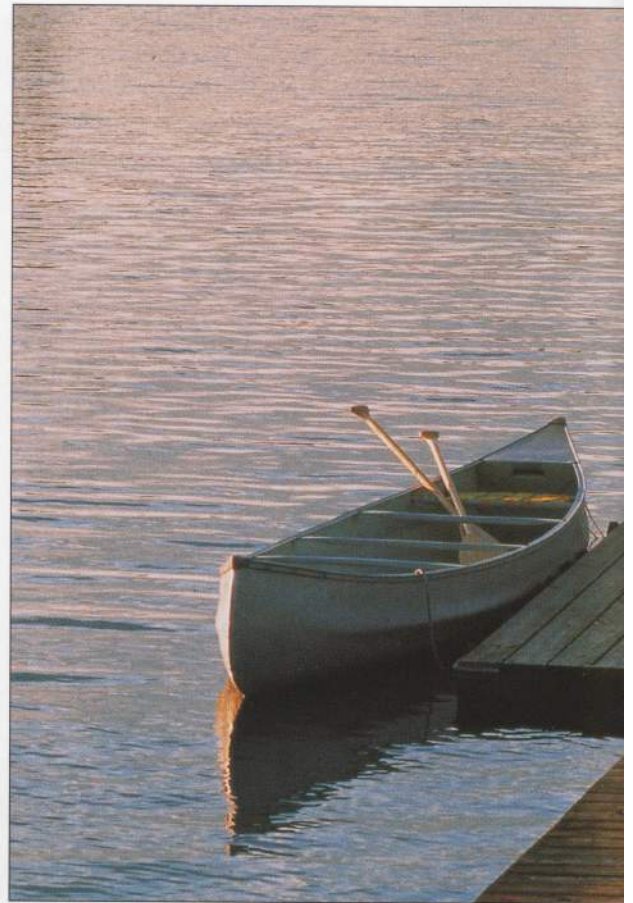
Hoshin is a Japanese word roughly meaning both internal compass and personal North Star and is a practice designed to break through apparent chaos to find a hidden higher order and direction.

If you had to choose the person most responsible for the frenetic pace of modern times, the best choice would probably be Taylor. You know, Frederick Winslow Taylor. Or perhaps you don't. Not to worry. I'd forgotten, too. But at the recent International Conference on Business & Consciousness in Santa Fe, Clare Crawford-Mason, author of *Quality or Else! The Revolution in World Business*, reminded me that Taylor was once the world's most renowned efficiency expert. Taylor observed traditional skilled artisans building products one at a time, analyzed their motions, and separated each move into a separate, relatively unskilled job, thus creating the more efficient method of assembly line production.

There appeared to be nothing Taylor could not break down and speed up. He provided the groundwork for the likes of Henry Ford, creating the huge production capabilities that would help win World War II. Along the way, Taylor's quest for efficiency reshaped our system of education. To fill the expanding factories, schools promulgated rigid hierarchies, and the ability to sit still obediently for long periods and perform endless repetitive tasks.

Today, every drive through a fast-food place is a tribute to Taylor. Jobs at such places are designed with no learning curve, so one's first day's production is the same as one's last. That makes for food that's quick and cheap, but one doesn't want to look closely at the mandated smiles or think deeply about what goes into the meal.

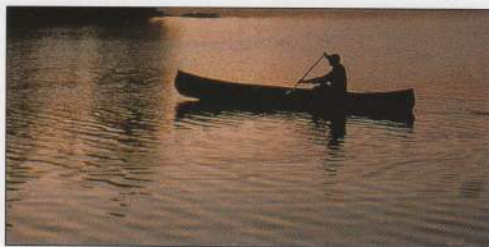
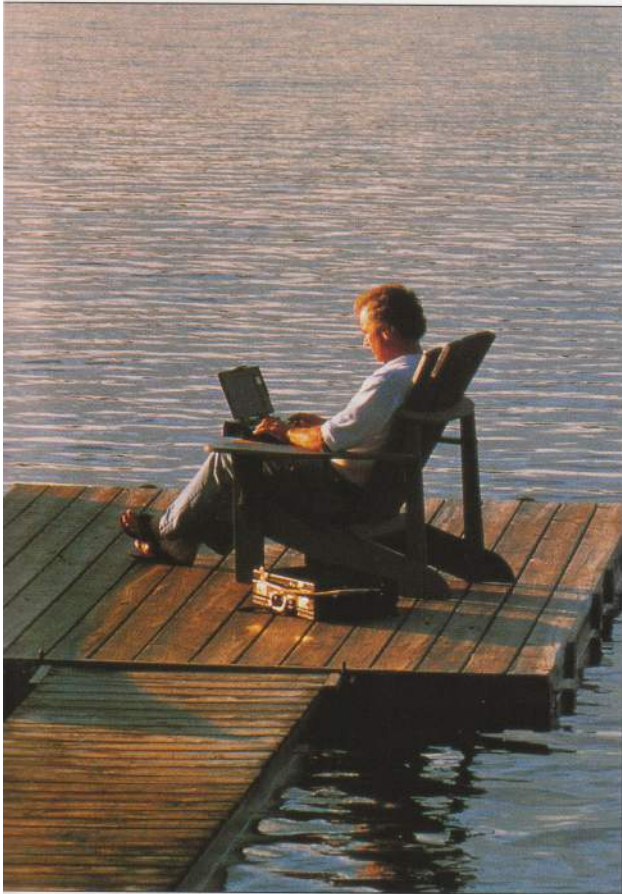
What's missing in the fast-food experience — caring, health, concern for the environment — is the ongoing business revolution of our new century. It actually began more than fifty years ago with quality pioneer W. Edwards Deming, who realized that dehumanizing a workforce created a factory that was less than the sum of its parts. Deming figured that if everyone on an assembly line could be supported to work as one — to care as much about the final product as the former lone artisan — the workers would be happier, the assembly line would be more



efficient, and the final products would be better.

Ignored in this country, Deming went to Japan just after World War II. He preached a gospel of quality to the war-ravaged country, and within four years his practices pushed Japan's exports higher than imports. Within a generation, Deming and his disciples had created an economic powerhouse, now the world's number-two economy. The biggest business prize in Japan is the Deming Prize, and this year one of his model companies, Toyota, will probably become one of America's top-three automakers.

"So what?" you say. "Why should a spiritually concerned person pay attention to the 'humanizing' management practices of Deming-based major multinationals?" The answer is that all the years of super-efficient production have provided us with so many possibilities and choices that, ironically, living an authentic, conscious life nowadays probably requires us to manage our-



selves like enlightened modern multinationals.

The person who really brought this idea home is Matthew Cross, a colleague of Crawford-Mason and president of a consulting group called Leadership Alliance in Stamford, Connecticut. Cross describes himself as a Deming disciple, and his path has been appropriate. His parents read *Summerhill*, a utopian book published in 1960, and were inspired by its author's arguments against the regimentation of modern school systems, so young Cross ended up being homeschooled from age six. Instead of going to college, Cross entered business, where he was an early

success, first as a natural-foods broker, then with a venture involving gift kiosks for Greenpeace, and then with a company that helped to launch the Discover card. Next, Cross discovered Deming and set out to inspire the world.

Cross became a trainer of *Hoshin*, a Japanese word roughly meaning both internal compass and personal North Star. *Hoshin* is a practice inspired by Deming, designed to break through apparent chaos to find a hidden higher order and direction. In traditional team *Hoshin* workshops, perhaps fifteen corporate leaders are brought together. They start by asking a big question, such as how they can become the most successful automakers or how their company might best reflect their values. Then everyone in the group comes up with multiple answers.

All the answers — there can be hundreds — are written on Post-It notes. Then the real work begins. Which answers are related? (They go in the same column.) Which answer drives another? (The “driver” gets priority). Gradually, through dialogue and discovery, the answers are organized in columns, and the priorities become clear. Typically, everyone is surprised by where the process ends up, and that creates a tremendous coherence on the part of the team. There is a letting go of territories and a huge release of energy.

Cross led *Hoshin* retreats with major companies for a couple of years before he led himself through the group process. Many hours and 70 Post-Its later, he knew he was onto something. Then he tried it on friends and family. Then he created workshops and public seminars. He found that families could do it together. So could lovers. Nowadays, Cross frequently does his traditional *Hoshin* training with top corporate execs and then leads large groups through his daylong *Personal Hoshin*TM program.

At the conference in Santa Fe, Cross led a group of personal coaches through a condensed version of the process. Afterward, we asked if he could create a version for the magazine, and he enthusiastically agreed. ❖

Hoshin almost always starts with a question, and you want to choose a question that really excites you, where you would feel phenomenal if you woke up living the answer to that question.

Stephen Kiesling is an editor of *Spirituality & Health*. He writes frequently about brain science and emerging views of what it means to be human. His book *The Shell Game*, now in print for 20 years, is widely considered the classic on collegiate rowing.

turn the page for a self-test