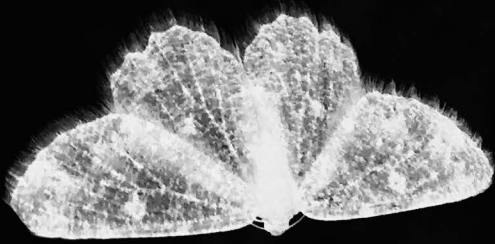


White Black Flag Flag



a spiritual anarchism workbook

Anna Mercury

For David –
So long, and thanks for all the fish.

A NOTE

“The Tao that can be spoken is not the Eternal Tao.”

Lao Tzu

“This is not the greatest song in the world. This is just a tribute.”

Tenacious D

This book, these words, are not the thing. They are an attempt to describe the thing. The thing can only ever be felt. I cannot guarantee that reading this will cause you to feel the thing.

Think of this more as a compass than a map. The feeling inside this book is simple, but that doesn't mean it's easy. This my best description of it:

Balancing resistance and acceptance through the choice of either/or, the awareness of choice, and the choice to choose.

This feeling applies at all levels, from the personal to the political to the spiritual. As above, so below. If you already feel what I mean by this and you live it fully, then there may be nothing more this book can give you.

If you don't, here we go.

INTRODUCTION

1) What is this book about?

It's a guide to moving towards a spiritual self-actualization, from an anarchist perspective. It's also a guide to moving towards anarchist utopia, from a spiritual perspective.

Through a spiritual lens, everything begins with consciousness. Through a political lens, everything begins with power. Power and consciousness are two sides of the same coin.

Power and consciousness begin in the self. They shape the self, and the self shapes everything outside of it. This is a guide to navigating that space, through stepping into the feeling of being able to choose when to resist and when to embrace.

This is about growth, discovery, deconstruction, empowerment, acceptance, love, and self-realization. It's also about Utopia. Each term is a different window into the same room. In the center of the room is a single duality: two energies, two options, which are themselves unified. I've chosen to portray them as flags.



The white flag is our symbol of surrender.

In everything from arguments to war, surrender is viewed as disempowering, weak and fearful. However, as anyone who has ever meditated can tell you, surrender can be entirely powerful, strong and brave. It is openness. Under the white flag are feelings of allowance, receptivity, permission, consent, release, trust, obedience, inaction, tolerance, compliance, and acceptance.

When you wave the white flag, you go with the flow. You embrace. On the river of life, it is the act of floating.



The black flag is our symbol of resistance.

Often in spiritual practice, resistance is viewed as immature, hostile or backward. However, as anyone who has ever been in a protest can tell you,

resistance can be entirely wise, loving and progressive. It is movement. Under the black flag are feelings of effort, will, struggle, challenge, rebellion, insubordination, dissent, defiance, and change.

When you wave the black flag, you go against the grain. You push. On the river of life, it is the act of swimming.

There is no grey flag, because that would imply a middle ground that doesn't exist. You cannot both resist and surrender to the same force in the same way. You can resist in some capacities and surrender in others, but in each case you are choosing either the white or black flag in turn.

Which brings us to our third flag: the yin-yang flag.



This is our symbol of balance.

It is not an energy unto itself. It is the quality that emerges from the balance of the white flag's surrender and black flag's resistance. It is union.

Under it are feelings of harmony, equilibrium, wholeness, completion, communion, and alignment.

You can't wave the yin-yang flag; it simply emerges as a balance of its two halves. Under the yin-yang flag, you do not go in any particular way; you just go. You are and you act. On the river of life, it is simply *the way* you go.

2) Is this about spirituality or politics?

Both, sometimes at once and sometimes in turn. If we agree that the personal is political, and the spiritual is personal, then it follows that the spiritual is political and the political is spiritual.

From a spiritual perspective, this should be obvious, because everything is spiritual. From a radical political perspective, this should also be obvious, because everything is political.

I believe there are crucial lessons to be learned from both "sides," and those lessons can apply to spirituality, politics, and personal and interpersonal life.

While I certainly cannot speak for all spiritual perspectives, I have seen many of them value the “white flag” far too highly while criticizing or demeaning the “black flag.” Likewise, I cannot speak for all political perspectives, but I have often seen the same phenomenon in reverse.

Struggling against the current of the world is so often an ineffective and wasteful thing to do. Learning to surrender to reality can be a profound remedy to the suffering caused by delusion, craving, and attachment. However, surrender is a profoundly stupid remedy to the suffering caused by rape, or mass incarceration, or genocide.

The point, to me, is to balance the two: to effectively navigate life using each energy in turn and in harmony. It is striking a balance between, “I am accepting the things I cannot change,” and, “I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

3) How is this book to be used?

Use it as best serves you.

My advice: Take this slow. Treat this as practice. Don’t rush through the book, and please reuse it again and again, as many times as you like.

Each chapter has a description of the topic and a question designed to help you apply it to your life. Try answering each question as honestly as you can (if you need more space to write, keep a notebook alongside this!) Try answering each question several times over the course of a month. See if anything changes.

The point is not to help you intellectually understand the point, but to offer a framework through which to look at your own life so that the *feeling* of it can arise.

If you get all the way through this and none of it emotionally resonated, I may not be the one to help you feel this right now. You may never have the feeling I describe. Or, you might finish this book, put it down feeling absolutely nothing, and have an experience five minutes later that causes it all to click.

I do believe that this is a feeling that every person can feel. I have no real proof for that statement, except that I keep seeing it happen.

4) What was the point of this again?

The word I used to describe what's at the heart of this book was a feeling. It is simply an awareness of a sensation.

I did not call it an idea. There are certainly ideas in this book, but the ideas are not the point. When did you truly understand love: when someone described it to you as a concept, or when you felt it?

I also did not call it a theory or hypothesis. I'm not making a claim to test and prove true, though there are theories and hypotheses within this book. They come at the end, in the form of advice. I also did not call it a truth. To be true, something must be falsifiable. How do you falsify a feeling? Feelings simply are or are not felt.

To reiterate, this is a description of the feeling:

Balancing resistance and acceptance through the choice of either/or, the awareness of choice, and the choice to choose.

Now, let us begin our study of the flags.



PART I:
FROM UNIVERSE TO SELF

Chapter 1: Consciousness

TL;DR

Consciousness is awareness of ability to choose.

What I Mean Is

What, actually, is consciousness? What separates *consciousness* from *being*? Consciousness is beyond simple awareness. We can be aware of stimuli, internal or external, but not be conscious of ourselves in relation to them. Consciousness is beyond simple action. We can act in this world but not be conscious of our relationship to action. Consciousness, then is not only awareness or action, but awareness of our ability to act or not act; it is awareness of our ability to make choices in action.

White Flag

Feeling aware.

Black Flag

Feeling able to choose.

Question 1)

What were you aware of choosing to do today?

Chapter 2: Natural Law

TL;DR

A law is a fundamental condition of reality. If it can be broken, it is not a law.

What I Mean Is

We are free to do everything except break the fundamental conditions of reality. We cannot simply decide to stop obeying the laws of physics, but we can certainly decide to stop obeying the laws of man. At the end of the day, if you *can* do it, then you can do it. Any law that claims you cannot do something that it is possible for you to do is no law; it is a rule. A rule is only as strong as it is obeyed.

White Flag

Obeying natural law, because you cannot do otherwise.

Black Flag

Disobeying anything else, because you can.

Question 2)

What is one thing you theoretically could disobey that you usually obey?

Chapter 3: Choice

TL;DR

Short of following natural law, every action you take is a choice. Choice does not imply fault.

What I Mean Is

At the very basic level, we can always choose to die. If we choose not to die, then we have already made a choice. Every action being a choice does not mean that infinite options are available, or that any or all available options are desirable. However, there will always be more than one option. This also does not mean that everything that happens *to us* is our choice. It isn't. But the actions that we take, we choose to take out of at least two possible options (death and not death), and usually many, many more.

White Flag

Saying Yes.

Black Flag

Saying No.

Question 3)

What things in your life do not feel like choices?

Chapter 4: Law of Emotions

TL;DR

Everything you feel you are allowed to feel.

What I Mean Is

There is no such thing as an incorrect feeling. Everything we feel is allowed to be felt, and we are allowed to feel it. How do we know this to be true? Because if it happened, then *it happened*. It was therefore allowed under natural law. Furthermore, emotions are always logical. This does not mean they are rational. Every emotion we feel has a cause that resulted in the emotion felt. All of our emotions makes perfect sense within the logic of our emotional landscapes, even if those landscapes are irrational.

White Flag

Validating your feelings.

Black Flag

Resisting the urge to invalidate your feelings.

Question 4)

What is one sensation or emotion you feel right now? Why does it make perfect sense that you feel that way?

Chapter 5: Law of Subjectivity

TL;DR

Everything you experience is a subjective experience.

What I Mean Is

Regardless of whether or not there is such a thing as objective reality, you and I will never, ever experience it objectively. We will never be able to prove beyond doubt that it exists, or prove beyond doubt that it is objective. Everything we experience, we experience subjectively. There is no way to remove our own subjectivity in perception. Subjectivity is a natural law of our experience.

White Flag

Acceptance of different perspectives.

Black Flag

Resolution in your own perspective.

Question 5)

What is one thing you believe to be objective?

What is a different possible way to perceive that thing?

Chapter 6: Law of Selfishness

TL;DR

Everything you do is done selfishly.

What I Mean Is

Just as there is no way to experience anything beyond our own subjective perception, there is no way to act in any way that does not serve our self-interest. Selfishness is neither a sin nor a virtue; it is a fundamental condition of all action we take.

Even if our self-interest is nothing more than a sense of righteousness, fulfilled duty or embodied love, we will always act in service of our own needs. Even the most seemingly altruistic act is done in service of whatever we value most in that moment.

White Flag

Allowing others to serve their self-interests.

Black Flag

Serving your own self-interest.

Question 6)

What is one thing you've done that felt selfless?
Why did you do it?

Chapter 7: Ego

TL;DR

Ego is nothing more or less than the idea of the conscious self that emerges when we divide ourselves.

What I Mean Is

Ego isn't a stagnant thing. Ego is simply the I that emerges out of the act of dividing the self into an *I* and a *me*. When we view ourselves as if from the outside and treat the self as a separate entity that can be controlled, judged, perceived or changed, we have stepped into Ego. Ego is the space of self that recognizes itself, that is aware of itself. It is the only way we can recognize ourselves *as selves*. It is also the antithesis of union. It is not necessarily good or evil; it simply is.

White Flag

Allowing the Ego to be, and embracing it as an intrinsic part of the self.

Black Flag

Pushing the self to change.

Question 7)

What do you notice about yourself?



PART II:
FROM SELF TO RELATIONSHIP

Chapter 8: The Good Life

TL;DR

We innately seek the good life.

What I Mean Is

Each of us innately seeks our unique version of ‘the good life;’ that is to say, we seek to cultivate a way of being in the world that allows us to satisfy our needs and fulfill our desires to the best of our ability. While much of our action can be conscious, the action of seeking the good life is as innate and unavoidable as a river winding its way to the sea. We are never not doing it.

White Flag

Embracing your understanding of the good life.

Black Flag

Using your conscious action to move yourself towards it.

Question 8)

What is one thing you did today in an attempt to make your life better? Now, look at everything else you did today. How did it serve the same purpose?

Chapter 9: Awareness of Feelings

TL;DR

If you know how you feel, you know what you need.

What I Mean Is

The simplest path to knowing our needs is to be aware of our feelings. The things we need are only ever emotions or states of being. When we are cold, we need to be warm. When we hungry, we need to be full. Much of our misguided action comes from not recognizing our true needs: that what we need is only ever to be in a certain state, either physical or emotional.

White Flag

Accepting your feelings.

Black Flag

Seeking to satisfy your needs.

Question 9)

What is one thing you need right now? Why do you need it?

Chapter 10: SatisfAction

TL;DR

We find the greatest satisfaction when we seek to meet our needs.

What I Mean Is

Once we know what our needs are and are not, and what it is we're actually looking to satisfy, we can act consciously to satisfy our needs. We are already seeking to meet our needs, but we so often fail because we do not understand what our needs actually *are*. We tend to equate the tools we use to satisfy our needs with the need itself. For example, money is a tool to meet needs. Even food is a tool to meet needs; our needs when we are hungry are fullness and nutrition.

White Flag

Answering the question, "What do I actually need right now?"

Black Flag

Answering the question, "What am I going to do about that?"

Question 10)

How can you meet the need you wrote in the previous chapter?

Chapter 11: The One-Path Fallacy

TL;DR

There are many possible ways to satisfy your needs.

What I Mean Is

What we need is only ever a sensation: a feeling or a state of being. One of the ways our actions go astray is in equating the need we are trying to satisfy with the tool we use to satisfy that need. We cling to the method of satisfying our need as though that method were the satisfaction itself. When we divorce our satisfaction from what we think satisfaction ought to look like, we find our needs are far easier to meet.

White Flag

Allowing yourself multiple options in seeking to satisfy your needs.

Black Flag

Actively finding new ways to satisfy your needs.

Question 11)

What are three more possible ways to meet the need you wrote down before?

Chapter 12: The One-Source Fallacy

TL;DR

You do not need anything from anyone that that person does not need to give you.

What I Mean Is

When we divorce our understanding of needs from the things we use to satisfy them, it becomes obvious that we do not need to rely on any one person in particular to meet that need. So much pain and tension is caused by believing our needs can only be satisfied by a particular person in a particular way when what we need is only ever a feeling. We do not need to control others to get them to meet our needs. If it does not happen from that person, we do not need it from that person.

White Flag

Accepting others' agency.

Black Flag

Needing what you need.

Question 12)

What do you desire someone to give you? What do you actually need? How else could that need be met?

Chapter 13: Other People

TL;DR

Other people exist. They also have feelings, needs, desires, awareness, and the ability to act.

What I Mean Is

Just as we can divide ourselves into ‘subjects’ and an ‘objects,’ the world also is full of other ‘objects’ who also view themselves as ‘subjects.’ We call these Other People. They are, in fact, *not you*. They have different perspectives, different subjective realities, different feelings, needs, and desires. They can also act to satisfy them. Their action may feel harmonious or tense with how you would like to act, and how you would like to be treated.

White Flag

Accepting other people for who they are.

Black Flag

Establishing boundaries for how you’d like to be treated.

Question 13)

How would you like to be treated?

Chapter 14: Control

TL;DR

You cannot actually control anything but yourself, but everything outside you influences you.

What I Mean Is

We cannot really change anyone else; you can change ourselves in the hopes that the changes we make go on to impact others. Everything another person does is still filtered through our perceptions; everything we do is filtered through theirs. However, we are never completely independent from outside influence; in fact, we are entirely made up of it. The question is not where the cycle began, but what to do with it from here.

White Flag

Not seeking to control anyone else, and allowing your self-control to emerge from acceptance.

Black Flag

Seeking to influence the world around you by changing your own actions within it.

Question 14)

What can you control right now?



PART III:
FROM RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIETY

Chapter 15: Consent

TL;DR

Consent is permission freely given; it is not the same as choice.

What I Mean Is

Choosing everything we do *does not* mean that we consent to every choice we make. Consent here is used as distinct from choice: it is not only giving permission to an experience, but giving permission from a place of relative *freedom*. There must be some relatively equal amount of power between parties, or the texture of consent is corrupted. Where is the line drawn on when the inequality of power become so great that one or more parties involved cannot give consent? That is in the eye of each individual involved.

White Flag

Giving consent only when it feels freely given.

Black Flag

Acting so that others do not feel coerced.

Question 15)

What is one thing you did but did not feel you chose? Why didn't it feel like a choice?

Chapter 16: Power Imbalance

TL;DR

Power imbalance is caused by desire; power itself is an inherent symptom.

What I Mean Is

While power imbalance may manifest as an inequality in ability to meet needs, it is caused by desire. Power imbalance exists in the space between us and our needs, in the methods of reaching satisfaction. If we desire one option over another strongly, we lessen our power against all factors that can progress or impede our movement towards that desired outcome. If we desire all possible options equally, nothing can increase or decrease our ability to meet our needs. This is *not* to say that we “should” desire all options equally.

White Flag

Allowing yourself to be disempowered in some things.

Black Flag

Pushing for your desires.

Chapter 16)

How has a desire you have shaped your choices?

Chapter 17: Fear and Control

TL;DR

Fear leads us to seek control.

What I Mean Is

If we did not fear harm, we would never seek to control anything. We would have no fear of others' full freedom if their freedom could not possibly harm us. Rather than seek to minimize anyone's incentive to harm others, we often seek to minimize their *ability* to harm others. This is folly, as we can never fully control anyone, including ourselves. We cannot control whether or not others will harm us; we can only control how we respond to our fear of harm.

White Flag

Trusting others not to harm you.

Black Flag

Setting clear boundaries with others about what you feel will harm you.

Question 17)

What do you fear?

Chapter 18: Harm

TL;DR

Others are able to harm you, and you can always be harmed.

What I Mean Is

Yes, of course, we can be harmed at any time. That doesn't mean we will be, it simply means we *can* be. We can likely harm others at any time. We could spend our whole lives trying to eliminate the ability of others to harm us, but we cannot eradicate it entirely. We could spend our whole lives trying to eliminate our own ability to feel harmed by anything, but we cannot eradicate it entirely. Personal invincibility is not allowed for under natural law.

White Flag

Trusting others not to harm you.

Black Flag

Resisting the urge to do harm simply because you have the means.

Question 18)

What had the ability to harm you today but didn't?

Chapter 19: Freedom and Safety

TL;DR

The freer we all are, the safer we each are.

What I Mean Is

When we are the freest we can be to meet our needs, we have the least possible need to harm others in order to have our needs met. We can best minimize *incentive* to harm by creating a social structure in which everyone has a relative equality of opportunity and power, and no one stands in the way between any person and the meeting of their needs.

White Flag

Accepting that you're already free, and giving trust.

Black Flag

Working to liberate others and dismantling power hierarchies.

Question 19)

Why have you harmed someone at any point?
What need, emotional or material, were you trying
to satisfy when you did so?

Chapter 20: The Opposite of Fear

TL;DR

The opposite of fear is trust.

What I Mean Is

We fear harm will be done to us (or our loved ones or property, so by extension, us). We seek to control the world around us in order to reduce the conditions under which harm could be done to us. However, seeking to control does not break fear; it only increases fear. The only thing that can break fear is *trust*. We trust others, and/or we trust ourselves. We open ourselves to risk, put ourselves in the position to possibly be harmed, and trust that we will not be.

White Flag

Giving trust.

Black Flag

Actively breaking fear.

Question 20)

Look back at the fear you wrote down previously.
What would you need to trust in order to not be
afraid of it anymore?

Chapter 21: Systems

TL;DR

Collective tendencies can shape individual behavior in ways that may not be conscious or consented to.

What I Mean Is

Certain things have a tendency to do certain things. A system is a tendency that holds enough power to shape behavior. The more conscious an entity is, which is to say the more aware it is of its ability to choose, the less power the tendency or system will have to determine its behavior. If it cannot be broken, it is a natural law. If it can be broken, it is a rule or a system. All systems that are not natural laws can be resisted.

White Flag

Accepting the influence of the systems that serve your needs.

Black Flag

Actively resisting the influence of systems that do not serve your needs.

Question 21)

What is one thing you did today simply because you were conditioned to do so?



PART IV:
FROM SOCIETY TO UNIVERSE

Chapter 22: Opposites and Unity

TL;DR

For two things to be opposites, they cannot be separate.

What I Mean Is

Night is only night because there is day. Now is only now because it is not later. I am me because you are you. For two things to be different, their identities cannot exist without one another. If two things require one another in order to have their identities, then those things only exist as a component of the relationship between them. Just because they are different does not mean they are separate.

White Flag

Knowing you are not separate.

Black Flag

Knowing you are still different.

Question 22)

What is one thing you feel you are that is distinct from someone else? What makes that distinct and not shared by everyone?

Chapter 23: Every Thing

TL;DR

Everything is every thing and every thing is everything.

What I Mean Is

If nothing in existence is truly separate, then it is all one unified entity. Each of it is all of it, just as all of it is composed of each part of it. This is a hard one to explain without it seeming like a riddle. Try thinking of it this way: You and I are human (unless your dog is reading this too?). We embody humanity, just as humanity is composed of us and every other human.

White Flag

Embracing oneness and wholeness.

Black Flag

Embracing distinction and difference.

Question 23)

What is one whole you are a part of, that you could never be separated from?

Chapter 24: Growth

TL;DR

Everything is trying to grow and so are you.

What I Mean Is

Call it prana, chi, life force, the division of cells: all life is trying to grow. Things are trying to expand and ascend, to multiply and survive, to pass on and increase their longevity. This is a natural law. You are also always trying to grow. Even in trying to stagnate or self-destruct, you try because you believe doing those things will help you grow. Everyone else is also trying to grow. Trying to grow is innate, and you can never not do it.

White Flag

Allowing yourself to grow in whatever direction suits you in this moment.

Black Flag

Pushing yourself to grow.

Question 24)

In what ways would you like to grow?

Chapter 25: Balance

TL;DR

Everything is trying to reach balance and so are you.

What I Mean Is

Just like trying to grow, everything in this universe naturally moves towards some sort of equilibrium. We are seeking the harmonious balance of ourselves, others, our needs, feelings, desires, values, and identities. So are all other people. The issue is that nothing is stagnant; equilibrium must be maintained as actively as it was achieved, and it cannot be maintained by clinging to any idea of what equilibrium is.

White Flag

Embracing all aspects of yourself.

Black Flag

Moving towards equilibrium in each moment.

Question 25)

What is one interest, feeling, or aspect of yourself that you haven't made time for in the last week?

Chapter 26: ReAction

TL;DR

To reach balance, we must grow in the opposite direction first.

What I Mean Is

A pendulum held off to one side cannot immediately settle in the center. If you have drifted too far North, you cannot correct your path by continuing to go straight; you must go South to get back on track. In order to reach harmonious equilibrium, we must move in the opposite direction in order to find center. How do we know which way to go? By being aware of the ways in which we've drifted away from our unique harmonious equilibrium, then doing the opposite.

White Flag

Accepting that you are at where you're at.

Black Flag

Turning yourself in a different direction.

Question 26)

What would you need to change to make time for the part of yourself/interest/feeling you wrote before?

Chapter 27: What Freedom Is

TL;DR

Freedom is having the utmost ability to choose.

What I Mean Is

We cannot have absolute infinite choice, at the very least because we are all constrained by natural law. However, even if we do not have infinity, there is still *an* infinity between zero and one. We are the freest we can possibly be when we have our utmost ability to choose. Our freedom is increased by both increasing our awareness of our options and by increasing our options.

White Flag

Increasing your awareness of your options.

Black Flag

Increasing your options.

Question 27)

What are you free to do right now? Name at least ten different actions.

Chapter 28: Utopia

TL;DR

Utopia is that which emerges out of everyone having the utmost freedom to live the good life.

What I Mean Is

Like the authentic self or equilibrium, Utopia is not a definitive, stagnant thing. It is unique and subjective. The only possible objective understanding of Utopia is the space in which everyone is living *the good life* to their utmost possible ability. Utopia is the non-stagnant equilibrium which emerges out of people seeking and finding their ability to live the good life.

White Flag

Allowing others to live their Utopias.

Black Flag

Actively creating your Utopia.

Question 28)

Think about your Utopia. What is one thing you can do right now to help it come to exist?



PART V:
SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

Chapter 29: Start Simple

TL;DR

Treat this as practice. Take it one step at a time.

What I Mean Is

If you try to live consciously in every possible way from the get-go, you'll likely be left feeling scattered and confused, feeling that you've failed. If you're not used to living consciously, it is going to take practice. Even if you are, there is always more practice to do. Be patient with yourself. Start small. Reduce the number of variables you have to engage with, or choose to only engage consciously in certain ways until that consciousness becomes innate. It's a muscle to exercise, like anything else. It will get stronger with time.

White Flag

Not worrying about every facet of life just yet.

Black Flag

Practicing your consciousness actively in the facets you've chosen.

Question 29)

What is one aspect of your life (only one!) in which you'd like to be more conscious?

Chapter 30: Act Now!

TL;DR

Only worry about the next five minutes.

What I Mean Is

What you feel is what you feel *now*. What you need is what you need *now*. In trying to simplify and practice, it can help not to look at the total trajectory of your entire life and instead simply focus on the present moment. What does it mean to be conscious right now? What do you feel and need right now? What are you going to do right now? The things that come later will come later.

White Flag

Embracing the present moment.

Black Flag

Resisting the urge to worry about the future.

Question 30

What do you feel like doing right now?

Chapter 31: Fuck the System

TL;DR

Break the patterns that condition you without your consent.

What I Mean Is

There are zillions of external stimuli condition the way you respond to yourself, without you consenting to that conditioning. In most cases, you aren't even aware that it's happening. Try breaking those patterns. Question everything you've been told, explicitly or implicitly: to feel, need, desire, value, or be. Try doing the opposite. The conditioning worth keeping will emerge naturally from this process.

White Flag

Embracing whatever action or feeling emerges naturally out of your current state of being.

Black Flag

Resisting what you've been conditioned to do.

Question 31)

What do you think is the right way to act? What if it were wrong?

Chapter 32: Follow Your Feelings

TL;DR

Do what feels right.

What I Mean Is

You know what feels right. You already know the difference between doing something because it sounds right, or you think it's right, or someone told you it was right, and doing the things that *feel* right. Try doing the things that feel right. No one can guarantee what will happen, but the results will invariably lead to things feeling more right than they would otherwise.

White Flag

Allowing yourself to feel right or wrong about something.

Black Flag

Resisting the urge to judge your feelings.

Question 32)

What feels right to do right now?

Chapter 33: Lean into Fear

TL;DR

Do what you fear to do because you fear to do it.

What I Mean Is

To keep fear from controlling you, you can neither obey it nor ignore it. You will always feel fear. It will always impact you. You will never be completely free from it. Rather than use it as a catalyst to avoid an action or attempt to avoid the feeling altogether, try using fear as a catalyst *to act*. There are so many fears we have that don't serve us. The fears that serve you will emerge naturally from the process of leaning into fear.

White Flag

Embracing the fact that you are afraid of things.

Black Flag

Doing things you're afraid to do.

Question 33)

What is one thing you could do right now that you are afraid to do?

Chapter 34: Catch and Release

TL;DR

Practice non-attachment by attaching and letting go.

What I Mean Is

Non-attachment is not stagnant, because nothing is stagnant. It is not necessarily about resisting the urge to attach to things, but also about embracing their natural transience. We can never be entirely passive, therefore to practice non-attachment actively we must be as active in releasing as we are in holding.

White Flag

Allowing yourself to attach.

Black Flag

Actively letting go.

Question 34)

What is one thing you could give up right now that you've long held onto? How could you celebrate releasing it?

Chapter 35: Trust

TL;DR

Rather than control, invest in trust.

What I Mean Is

Trust yourself. Give up control of yourself entirely unto yourself. Trust others. Give up control of others entirely unto them. Trust nature. Trust *your* nature. Trust your reality. Trust your feelings. Trust your needs. Act in the way you want to act, be who you want to be, and impact the world to nudge it towards being the world you want to live in. Trust that the movements you make within it will shift the current in that direction.

White Flag

Giving up control of yourself entirely unto yourself; giving up control of others entirely unto them.

Black Flag

Making the changes you want to see now so that you can trust they will continue, rather than hope things will change.

Question 35)

What is one thing you would do right now if you fully trusted yourself?

CONCLUSION

1) **Not the thought, the feeling.**

This is a book and a book is made of words and words are made in the left-brain where we think about things.

Reading these words probably didn't make you feel the thing, did it? Remember: You're not trying to understand the thing. You're *allowing* yourself to *feel* it.

Go back to any bit that stuck with you, or that you wrestled with, or that you hated. Anything you thought about but did not feel.

Trust me? Okay:

Let's make this a practice. Take the TL;DR sentence for that chapter and apply it like a lens to your life. Write it on your hand. Filter one entire day through it. Just one day; you can do it to your whole life another time. Spend the entire day operating as though the sentence were true.

Pretend you believe me until you believe me.

2) You're always already doing it. Breathe. Now do it more.

There's this story in *The Tao of Pooh* that has stuck with me for years. It's about Pooh opening a honey jar. All the other animals in the Hundred Acre Wood try to open the honey jar, but only Pooh succeeds.

“How did you do it?” they ask him.

And Pooh says that he turned the lid as far as it would go. Then he breathed. Then he turned it further, and it opened.

The thing about trying to meet your needs...
 The thing about trying to love yourself...
 The thing about trying to grow...
 The thing about trying to create Utopia...

The thing about *living* is that you're already doing it, no matter what. Meeting your needs, loving yourself, growing and living in harmony with yourself and others – this is what you are trying to do with every breath you take.

This is all you can do, because you can only act to serve yourself, and that means only acting to serve

your needs: in harmony with yourself and others, embedded in society and in the universe.

It is not a question of *what* you're doing, but *how* you're doing it. This feeling, you already have it. If you don't feel like you do, you're just not used to recognizing it. You will. I trust you to.

I'll say it one more time for the folks in the back: you're already doing it. The path to doing it better is *awareness* and *trust*.

It's that simple.

3) If your brain has started to feel like static noise falling down a fractal wormhole...

...Welcome home!

If you've been chewing on this deeply, you might be hitting that crisis point where nothing means anything anymore because everything is everything and reality starts feeling like a hyperactive acid trip and it's difficult to cope.

You may have realized that the white flag and black flag are opposites and can be navigated as such but because they are opposed they cannot actually be separate and waving one flag

automatically waves the other and the harmonious balance of the two is never irrevocably achievable because it is a constant process of growth and even stagnation is a part of growth and tension is a part of harmony and resisting change exudes force which must produce energy and embracing change resists stagnation which must produce energy and everything can dissolve into itself and everything else and contrast may be real but everything is also one and contrast and oneness are also both in contrast and unified and on and on ad infinitum so *What. The. Fuck. Does. Any. Of. This. Mean?*

Ooh mama. Yeah, I know.

For now, you could take a lesson from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*:

DON'T PANIC.

Nothing is under control. If you're completely lost, take heart: you are doing just fine.

Here's the thing: the rabbit hole doesn't end. There is always deeper to go. Maybe, like Alice in Wonderland feared, you can fall so far in that you go out like a light. Maybe there is a bottom and that bottom is Nirvana. If you get there, let me

know. I'll probably ask you how you're sure you can't go deeper.

You can fall and fall and fall into the everythingness of everything until all reality means everything and nothing and existence is a cosmic hum tuned into your frequency... but at some point you'll have to eat dinner.

So if you need help staying a bit more grounded here on Earth, this is my advice:

Laugh, and eat dinner.

Laugh as hard as you can for as long as you can. It all feels ridiculous because it is.

Next, get into your body. Run, swim, exercise, masturbate, hug someone, have sex. Smell something nice. Eat a large meal. Satisfy your physical needs. Drink water. Sleep. Get warm. Be a body. Roar. Inhale, exhale.

The rabbit hole will still be there for you whenever you want to go back in. If you're anything like me, it might become addictive, to flit between the worlds. In my experience, it might not make you many friends but it will make you the right ones.

4) This is a compass, not a map.

That's because there isn't a map, and I'd be eternally cautious of anyone claiming they can give you explicit directions to your own truth. There is no formula to lay over it all and automatically know exactly when to turn which way. No one can tell you the right way to be you.

To move forwards, ask yourself:

- How do I feel?
- What do I need?
- How can I act in this moment to satisfy my needs?

To stop holding back, ask yourself:

- What do I fear?
- What would I stop trying to control if I didn't fear that?
- What can I trust instead?

This feeling is a compass, aligning you to your own 'True North.' It is up to you to readjust yourself along the way, depending on where you drift and which direction you wish to head from there.

If you're anything like me, the lengths you drift 'astray' will grow smaller with time. Reorienting

yourself to your natural state of balance will get faster and easier.

My advice, if you want it, is to be patient with yourself. Be patient and be kind. All you're ever doing is practicing. There is no mastery. That's why they call it a *practice*.

This is simple. It's annoyingly, excruciatingly, hilariously simple.

That does not mean it's easy.