

Musings

A non-fiction collection

Nonfiction Explorations

Abridged Version

By Hallett German

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Table of Contents

Chapter 01: Introduction

Chapter 02: Lessons on the Run: Introduction

Chapter 03: Lessons on the Run: Dining and Our Thoughts

Chapter 04: Lessons on the Run: The Practice of Travel

Chapter 05: Lessons on the Run: The Practice of Waiting for Someone

Chapter 06: Lessons on the Run: The Bad Trip

Chapter 07: Lessons on the Run: Laboratory of the Ego

Chapter 08: Lessons on the Run: The Practice of Snow Shoveling

Chapter 09: Inner Balance at the Office: Preface

Chapter 10: Inner Balance at the Office: Introduction

Chapter 11: Inner Balance at the Office: Are You a CSO?

Chapter 12: Inner Balance at the Office: Attitude is Important

Chapter 13: Inner Balance at the Office: Inner Peace During a Major Change

Chapter 14: Inner Balance at the Office: Putting it all Together

Chapter 15: Change Agent's Guide: Listening

Chapter 16: Change Agent's Guide: Commitment

Chapter 17: Change Agent's Guide: First Steps

Chapter 18: Change Agent's Guide: Listen Again

Chapter 19: Healing Workplace Blog

Chapter 20: Portland Poetry

Image Credit:

Chapter 1: Introduction

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

This book gives a unified look at my various non-fiction writings from 2004-2009. The topics range from contemplation, being a change agent, and inner peace at the workplace. During 2008, I briefly maintained a website called healingworkplace.com. At the time, there was very little on the topic of using work as a Dharma Door to awakening. The website header alternated saying "Peace is possible" and "at any moment." These creations have literally been gathering digital dust for some time. Note that nothing new was created for this book

so the content remains incomplete. I have tried to indicate where these works were going. Any edits performed were for the sake of clarifying the content. It is hoped that this modest work aids you in your journeys and mental explorations

HG

Chapter 2: Lessons on the Run: Introduction

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[The full name of the work was “Lessons on the Road: Zen-Flavored Contemplative Practice at Home and On the Road.” It was written between 2007-2009 as a collection of very short essays.]

As I’m writing this, I am riding on an overnight Amtrak train that includes a grueling ten-hour trip. It involves being in a small car with seats having a comfortable level somewhere between being in one’s one bed and spending time in a seat at the movies. Each of the riders in the car has their own needs (sleep, food, keeping current with emails, or being on the prowl for a new partner etc.) Coping with fatigue/lack of sleep, cramped quarters, cafe car food, etc. is a lesson for each of the travelers. A long trip will provide many opportunities of practicing mindful behavior whether the rider knows it or not.

The book covers some of these chances for contemplation practice on the road and at home – in everyday life. Much of this was written at airports or train stations so it has been “field-tested.”

The Zen teacher Eihei Dogen, wrote how the path to personal liberation was visible to all and not hidden. Even after hundreds of years, one can find his works online and read his words. Immediately, one feels the simplicity and the power of his writing. It is time to run through the doorway that Dogen and other spiritual teachers have opened to us. Now is the time to seize each life moment, work through them, and learn from them.

Chapter 3: Lessons on the Run: Dining and Our Thoughts

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[This came to be while eating at a popular restaurant chain in 2007. It was the first sections written for this work.]

The lessons of dining on the road are very powerful.

While at home, you may interact with other family members or friends when eating. But on the road, it is almost always a lonely table for one.

During a dinner, you may have a waitress or waiter who is rushing back and forth. In between, they are constantly asking you if you need anything else or how is the food. This may even include an interruption while you are in the middle of swallowing a bite. At that moment, you may feel anger and impatience because of not being allowed time to yourself to mindfully enjoy eating. But soon, you are taken in by a different feeling. Waves of compassion overwhelm you as you see that the waiters and waitresses are very much part of a world of scarcity. It looks like they are always feeling rushed, planning the next step, and never really being here and now.

Their situation is not much different from what goes on in our minds. Our thoughts continually interrupt us wanting attention and attempt to overcome us for as long as possible. There is little respect for the now, or silence, or non-action. We just need to step aside and permit ourselves the silence before engulfing ourselves back into the "meal" of thoughts.

Chapter 4: Lessons on the Run: The Practice of Travel

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[Three unwritten chapters were to follow: Two of these were Abundance vs. Scarcity, and the Kindness of Others. The third chapter may be written at a later date.]

Due to the very chaotic nature of travel, there will always be delays, overfilled planes, no space for luggage, missed appointments, etc. Unexpected things will happen and happen again. How will we deal with these situations? We need to be careful because one bad choice can lead to another. These choices also can have implications for our interaction with others, and feelings for ourselves.

Before, during, and after a trip, one is likely be overtaken by a series of ongoing thoughts, emotions, choices, and actions. These include the following:

- 1) Schedule -- Will the train/plane/bus/automobile etc. leave on time and arrive on time?
- 2) Safety -- Will I get there safely?
- 3) Comfort -- Will it be a comfortable trip?
- 4) Direction -- Can I find my final destination?
- 5) Luggage -- Will my luggage arrive intact?

Each one of these thoughts is a learning opportunity that brings us one-step closer to mental liberation. So how will we meet each opportunity? With doubt? With perceived feelings of scarcity of time? With uncertainty? Or with acceptance? These are just a small part of the 84,000 Dharma Doors that the Buddha and others talked about – the numerous feelings and thoughts that we have at any given time.

The best opportunity to freedom is by “going with the flow” and accepting the situation – work with whatever is given to us. Whether dealing with late planes, life-threatening situations, or just an uncomfortable moment, the response should always be the same – acceptance and being present in the situation.

The most important time is how you handle the initial moment of the “crisis” – when the “bad stuff” first happens. This moment of our emotional awareness of the situation is called “the first arrow.” After the news sinks in, we face an important decision. Do we shrug it off and work with what is given to us? Or do we “fire back” instantly with anger, harsh words, etc. causing a “second arrow” to hit us?

Here are some questions to ask yourself when a “travel situation” arises:

1. Do I think that I’m the only one in discomfort or do I realize that there are others undergoing the same situation?

2. Do I realize that just my viewpoint alone can change any situation for myself and others?
Do I try to avoid the “second arrow” on first impact?
3. Do I try to bring some comfort and reassurance to others in these situations or am I just lost in my own false story of wounded thoughts?
4. Do I acknowledge that in most cases the situation and the discomfort will eventually end and is not life threatening?
5. Am I thankful that I am now immersed in a life growing opportunity and life has provided a great situation with helpful teachers?
6. Have I found the humor in the situation?
7. When the situation is over, am I still mulling it over and waiting to tell others how I was wronged?
8. Do I artificially separate myself from others so I think that I am the only one suffering?
9. Do we pause when the situation is over and give thanks or just move on into the next situation?

Happy traveling! And make sure that you don't take the baggage of the “wounded self” with you!

[If you like what you have read so far, please consider purchasing the book at finer e-book online stores. Also, please please check out my other works at:
<https://sites.google.com/site/hallettgermanfiction/>]