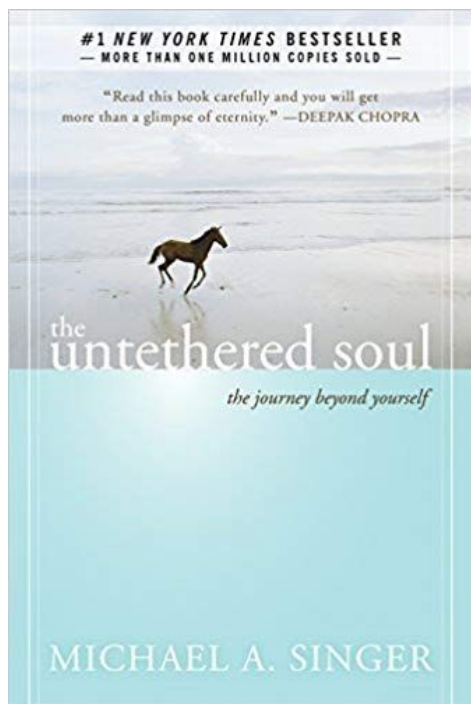


Favorite Quote:

“There is nothing more important to true growth than realizing that you are not the voice of the mind—you are the one who hears it.”



Summary: the goal of [The Untethered Soul](#) is to free yourself from yourself. It is about shutting off that incessant, nagging voice in your mind, and embracing your true spiritual conscious self.

To accomplish this we must *untether* ourselves from the menacing nature of our mental, emotional and physical self. We must learn to be a witness to life's unfolding, without getting caught up in the folds.

This book elegantly bridges Eastern and Western traditions to reveal how meditation, yoga, and religion are all paths to the same place: spiritual enlightenment. It is about finding your “Seat of Self”—the part of you that is *not* your thoughts, *not* your emotions, and *not* your physical corpus. Pure awareness, pure consciousness, pure energy.

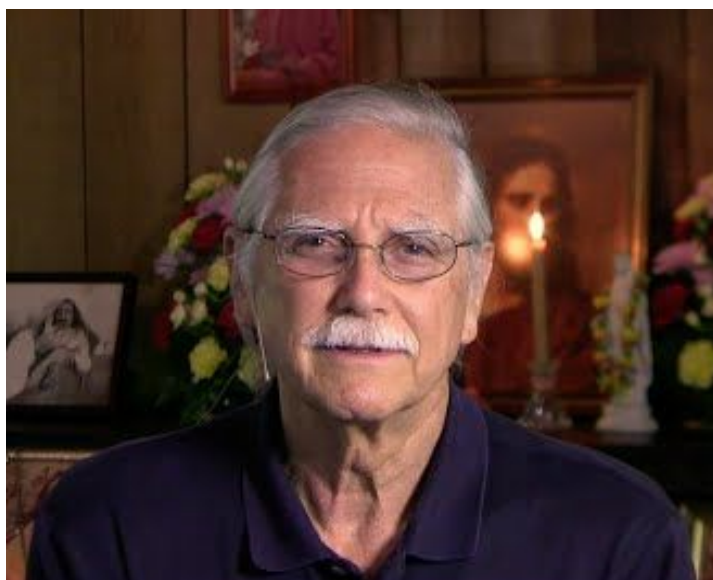
Your brain has a tactical advantage over you because it knows all your fears. To avoid pain your psyche will try to *close* which risks an entire life of fear and avoidance. Being closed drains our inner energy tremendously.

The most important thing in life is your inner energy. If you're always tired and never enthused, life is no fun. But if you're always inspired and filled with energy, then every minute of every day is limitless. Stay open.

“If you want to free yourself, you must first become conscious enough to understand your predicament. Then you must commit yourself to the inner work of freedom. You do this as though your life depended on it, because it does.”

Michael A. Singer (born 6 May 1947) is a former CEO of billion-dollar company WebMD, a bestselling author, a meditation center founder, and a former software programmer. His two books, *The Untethered Soul* (2007) and *The Surrender Experiment* (2015), were *New York Times* bestsellers. In 1975, he founded Temple of the Universe, a long-established yoga and meditation center for people of any religion or belief to experience inner peace.

On the business side, Singer is a notable figure in the medical software industry. He created the Medical Manager, which was one of the very first programs to help medical practitioners to digitize their medical records. The Medical Manager is now a recognized achievement archived in the Smithsonian Institution. Due to the success of the Medical Manager, Singer became the CEO of WebMD which focused on medical data management. He resigned from WebMD in 2005 and focused on writing.



On structure: the sequence of the book chapters is important. Similar to how the [pyramids were constructed](#), the author starts with a broad foundation to establish key concepts—and questions—of “self.” He then challenges, refines and sharpens these concepts, building upward, with each layer illuminating (or dismantling) another facet of our existence: psyche, emotions, energy, pain, fear, happiness, death, and spirituality. For this reason I recommend reading this book front to back.

Part 1: Awakening Consciousness

1. The Voice Inside Your Head
2. Your Inner Roommate
3. Who Are You?
4. The Lucid Self

Part 2: Experiencing Energy

5. Infinite Energy
6. The Secrets of the Spiritual Heart
7. Transcending the Tendency to Close

Part 3: Freeing Yourself

8. Let Go Now or Fall
9. Removing Your Inner Thorn

10. Stealing Freedom from Your Soul
11. Pain, the Price of Freedom

Part 4: Going Beyond

12. Taking Down the Walls
13. Far, Far Beyond
14. Letting Go of False Solidity

Part 5: Living Life

15. The Path of Unconditional Happiness
16. The Spiritual Path of Nonresistance
17. Contemplating Death
18. The Secret of the Middle Way
19. The Loving Eyes of God

This is Hurricane Isabel. In 2003 this storm caused \$5.5 billion of damage in two weeks by laying siege to Caribbean islands and the US Atlantic coastline. 51 people lost their lives. It was an aggressive storm.



The hurricane is my favorite metaphor in this book. It represents life so perfectly with its seemingly endless barrage of challenges, deadlines, and hardship swirling around us. Our job is to remain centered in the eye of the hurricane. Come to embrace—even admire—the cyclonic complexity of life. Find your own inner calm. Use *your awareness of your own consciousness* to avoid being pulled into the rainbands.

Part 1 is about reconnecting with your own inner consciousness. For most people this is extremely hard because we've been so conditioned to be consumed with our thoughts and emotions. The author repeatedly—and effectively—calls into question our own psyche and its constant nagging.

“There is nothing more important to true growth than realizing that you are not the voice of the mind—you are the one who hears it.”

The author personifies our psyche as our “inner roommate” which is incredibly prohibitive to personal growth. I also noticed parallels to [Stoic philosophy](#) in that maintaining consciousness is akin to Marcus Aurelius' discipline of perception—both have a shared goal of dispassionate objectivity. Why is our psyche such a formidable opponent? Because it's trying to “help” us avoid pain.

“The truth is that most of life will unfold in accordance with forces far outside your control, regardless of what your mind says about it.”

Using the mind as a protection mechanism ultimately makes you feel more secure. As long as that's what you want, you will be forced to constantly use your mind to buffer yourself from life, instead of living it. But true personal growth is about transcending the part of you that is not okay and needs protection.

“Your inner growth is completely dependent upon the realization that the only way to find peace and contentment is to stop thinking about yourself.”

Consciousness exercise: to regain your seat of Self, say “hello” several times to yourself. Refocus your awareness within.



“Consciousness is the highest word you will ever utter. There is nothing higher or deeper than consciousness. Consciousness is pure awareness.”

Eventually, you will get to a point within yourself where you realize that you, the experiencer, has a certain quality. And that quality is awareness, consciousness, an intuitive sense of existence.

Life's predicament is being trapped or lost in a movie you can't escape vs. being a centered being. The centered being is always aware of 1) being conscious, and 2) its independence from inner and outer objects. When you are a centered being, however, your consciousness is always aware of being conscious. Your awareness of being is independent of the inner and outer objects you happen to be aware of.”

You will find that you are tremendously expansive.

Part 2 is about unleashing your inner energy. This isn't the energy that comes from food and sleep. It is *infinite* energy. It is always available to you. It comes from your own personal fountain of consciousness.



“The only reason you don’t feel this inner energy all the time is because you block it. You block it by closing your heart, by closing your mind, and by pulling yourself into a restrictive space inside. You have a wellspring of beautiful energy inside of you. What it needs is openness and receptivity.”

Under normal circumstances our state of openness is left to psychological factors. We are only limited by our ability to stay open. The more you learn to stay open, the more energy can flow into you. You do this by thinking “relax and release.” *Car cuts you off?* Relax and release. *Nasty email?* Relax and release. *Didn’t get the bonus you wanted?* Relax and release. *Lost a big deal?* Relax and release. *Instagram FOMO?* Relax and release. *Kids driving you nuts?* Relax and release.

Favorite quotes:

- “As long as you are defining what you like and what you don’t like, you will open and close. You are actually defining your limits. You are allowing your mind to create triggers that open and close you.”
- “Relax, and release. Relax, and release. Relax, and release.”
- “You will get to a point in your growth where you understand that if you protect yourself, you will never be free.”
- “Life becomes stagnant when people protect their stored issues.”
- “The reward for not protecting your psyche is liberation.”
- “Consciousness has the tendency to focus on disturbance. If you aren’t centered, your consciousness is just following whatever catches its attention.”

The most important thing in life is inner energy.

Part 3 is about acknowledging that you have pain. We all have a painful thorn lodged in our heart. Remove it, and then let all future disturbances and blockages become fuel for the journey. This chapter is about freeing yourself from these lifelong patterns of psychological torment. You’ll realize that the advice you mind is giving you is psychologically damaged advice.

“If you have a lot of fear, you won’t like change. You’ll try to create a world around you that is predictable, controllable, and definable.”

The alternative is to decide not to fight with life. You realize and accept that life is not under your control. Fear is caused by blockages in the flow of your energy. . . Fear is the cause of almost every problem in life.



“If you don’t solve the root cause of the problem [the “thorn”], but instead, attempt to protect yourself from the problem, it ends up running your life.”

“Once you close, your mind will build an entire psychological structure around your closed energy.”

“People end up using their relationships to hide their thorns.”

The more you sit in the Self, the more you will begin to feel an energy that you have never experienced before. It comes up from behind, rather than in front where you experience your mind and emotions. Success means you never have to think about your psyche again. You should never have to figure out how to be okay, or how to not be scared, or how to feel loved.

“At some point in the journey it all becomes heart, not mind. You will see that the mind follows the heart. The heart reacts way before the mind starts talking. When you are conscious, the shifts of energy in your heart cause you to instantaneously be aware that you are back there noticing. The mind doesn’t even get a chance to start up because you let go at the heart level.”

Face the pain. The deep layer of pain seated in the core of your heart.

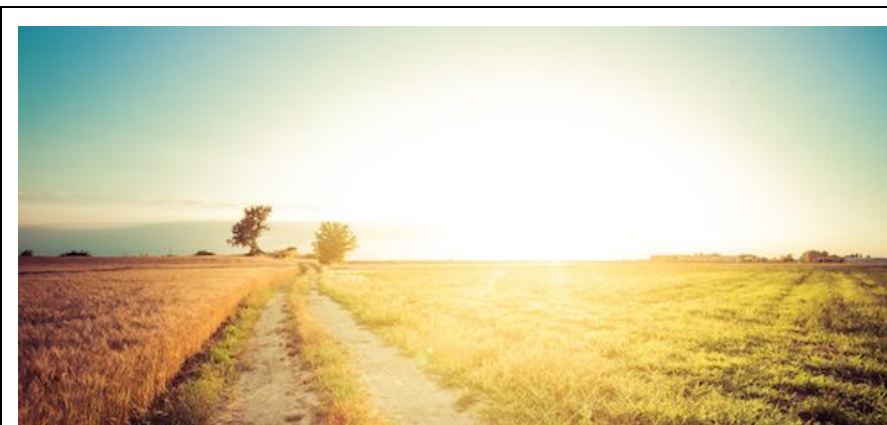
Part 4 is titled “going beyond” which refers to escaping the psychological structures we’ve built over a lifetime. The limitations and boundaries we’ve imposed on ourselves only exist at the places where we’ve stopped going beyond. The proverbial “comfort zone” is a psychological model we’ve constructed and live within. We label everything that doesn’t fit in our model as wrong, bad, or unfair. It is time to take down the walls.

“The more you sit in the seat of witness consciousness, the more you realize that since you are completely independent of what you are watching, there must be a way to break free of the magical hold that the psyche has on your awareness. There must be a way out.”

The house below represents the psychological and emotional walls we build to *protect* ourselves. However, in reality, they are confining our lives and preventing us from experiencing infinite light, energy and life. We decorate our walls with stuff: memories of our past experiences, and dreams of the future.



We restrict ourselves. That's what we do with walls; we avoid running into them. But because you avoid running into them, they lock you inside the perimeter. They become your prison because they are the boundaries of your awareness.



“Once you decide to step out—to burst through the limiting thoughts and emotions you’ve build around you—you will look back at that little house you built, and you will wonder why you were ever in there.”

Limitations and boundaries only exist at the places where you stop going beyond. To go beyond you must keep going past the limits that you put on things. This requires changes as the core of your being.”

“Your choice is to either resist reality or go beyond the limits of your model.”

“When you truly awake spiritually, you realize you are caged. You wake up and realize that you can hardly move in there. You’re constantly hitting the limits of your comfort zone. You see that you’re afraid to tell people what you really think. You see that you’re too self-conscious to freely express yourself. You see that you have to stay on top of everything in order to be okay.”

- “When you approach the edge you feel insecurity, jealousy, fear, or self-consciousness. You pull back, and if you are like most people, you stop trying. **Spirituality begins when you decide that you’ll never stop trying. Spirituality is the commitment to go beyond, no matter what it takes.**
- *You keep holding on to things as though consistency can substitute for stability. The Buddhists have a term for this: clinging. In the end, “clinging” is what the psyche is all about.*
- Don’t ask, “What do I do about this?” Instead ask, **“Who am I that notices this?”**

You must be willing to see that this need to protect yourself is where the entire personality comes from. It was created by building a mental and emotional structure to get away from that sense of fear. You are no standing face-to-face with the root of the psyche. You will see events that took place when you were ten years old that you’re still holding onto. You will see that you’re literally taking all your memories, pulling them together in an orderly fashion, and saying that’s who you are. But you are not the events; you’re the one who experienced the events.

You must decide, once and for all, to take the journey of constantly letting go.

This journey is one of passing through exactly where you have been struggling not to go.

Part 5 is about choosing to be unconditionally happy. It is about realizing that life is rather short and the events we experience between birth and death are all gifts. After all, you are just an ephemeral composition of matter spinning on a ball in the middle of nowhere.



You can truly reach a state in which you never have any more stress, tension, or problems for the rest of your life. You just have to realize that life is giving you a gift, and that gift is the flow of events that takes place between your birth and your death. These events are exciting, challenging, and create tremendous growth. To comfortably handle this flow of life, your heart and mind must be open and expansive enough to encompass reality. The only reason they’re not is because you resist. Learn to stop resisting reality, and what used to look like stressful problems will begin to look like the stepping stones of your spiritual journey.

“Committing yourself to unconditional happiness will teach you every single thing there is to learn about yourself, about others, and about the nature of life. You will learn all about your mind, your heart, and your will.”

The simplicity of this question: “Do you want to be happy, or do you not want to be happy?” Once you make that choice, your path through life becomes totally clear. It can’t be a conditional happiness. . . I’ll be happy so long as . . . if I make this much money. . . get this big house. . . drive this nice car. . . . NO. You must first decide, do you want to be happy or not.

Favorite quotes:

- “No matter what happens, just enjoy the life that comes to you.”
 - For example, if someone says something that you really don’t like, what you’re really resisting is the experience of the event passing through you. We don’t want it affecting us inside. We know it is going to make mental and emotional impressions that will not fit with what’s already in there.
- “Eventually you’ll see that this resistance is a tremendous waste of time. The fact is, you’re generally using your will to resist one of two things: that which has already happened or that which hasn’t happened yet.”
- “It is not life’s events that are causing problems or stress. It is your resistance to life’s events that is causing this experience.”

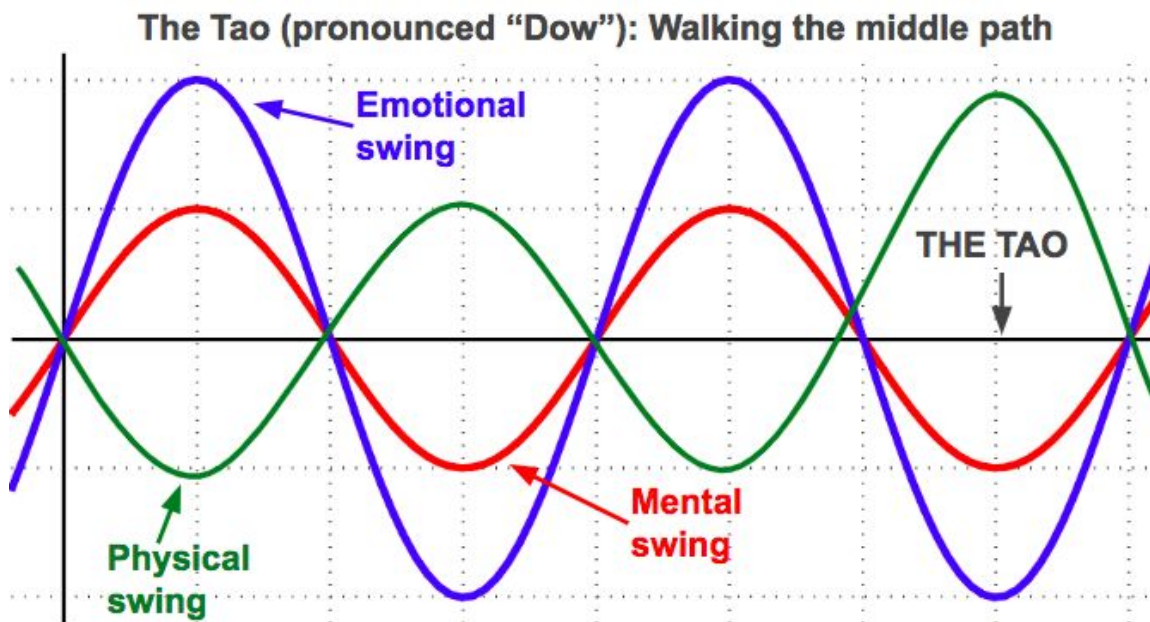
Key point: Not resisting doesn’t mean not dealing with things. The author doesn’t advocate for passivity. You’re welcome to deal with it, but first *let the energy make it through you*. Accept it. Stress? No, it’s a stepping stone on my spiritual journey.

Death is not a morbid thought. Death is the greatest teacher in all of life. *What are you doing with life?* That is what death asks you. Death is watching our footsteps. Since you know you’re going to die, be willing to say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done.

“Death is giving meaning to your life. You get in your car, drive from here to there, and you don’t see anything. You’re not even there. You’re busy thinking about what you’re going to do next. You’re a month ahead of yourself, or even a year. You’re not living life; you’re living mind.”

Tao te Ching and the Tao

The Tao is the middle. It is a concept based on harmony. Extremes are not sustainable and consume massive amounts of our energy. To live a life full of inner energy, you must find, and stay, in the middle—the Way.



How do you stop the pendulum from swinging to the outer edges? Amazingly enough, you do this by leaving it alone. It won't keep swinging to the extremes unless you feed the extremes with energy.

"If you chose the center and not participate in the extremes, you will come to know the Tao."



Sailing is another great metaphor for the Tao. Sailing requires an interplay of multiple forces: the wind, the sail, the rudder, and the tension of the lines on the sail. To move in the Way of the Tao, you have to find the feeling of balance. Too much tension and you risk keeling over; too little and the sails luff and you lose speed and control.

"In the Tao of sailing, the balance point is not static; it's a dynamic equilibrium. You move from balance point to balance point, from center to center. You can't have any concept of preferences; you have to let the forces move you. In the Way, nothing is personal. You are merely an instrument in the hands of the forces, participating in the harmony of balance."

"Effortless action is what happens when you come into the Tao. Life happens, you're there, but you don't make it happen. There is no burden; there is no stress. The forces take care of themselves and you sit in the center. That is the Tao. It's the most beautiful place in all of life."

As you associate less with the physical and psychological parts of your being, you begin to identify more with the flow of pure energy. Your Spirit is what's left of you once you've released the physical, emotional and mental aspects of your life. As you go deeper and deeper, you will start to notice a phenomenal thing—you are no longer judging. The process of judging has simply stopped. There is just appreciating and honoring.

Remember, whoever remains present with fixity of purpose comes out on top in the end.
