

## The Eight “P” Path of Mastery

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**Received:** December 15, 2017; **Published:** January 24, 2018

The elusive path of mastery  
The one all would like to find  
Eight “P”s illumine the mystery  
Fusing spirit, body and mind.

The initial “P” is plain to see  
You can’t close your eyes and pray  
But must crawl and fall through infancy  
To practice the night away.

Mastery, mastery  
The body is a temple  
Do you agree?  
Mastery, mastery  
The body is a temple  
Do you agree?

Now practice nurtures progress  
Unless driven to impress  
Upon the fate of old Bjorn Bored  
Beware shooting star success.

For the learning arc will go flat  
What direction do you go?  
The pass in the impasse, where it’s at  
So don’t jump off that plateau.

Mastery, mastery  
Our mind is the canvas  
So let it be.  
Mastery, mastery  
Our mind is the canvas  
So let it be.

Let the tension challenge assumption  
Light a candle amidst the fog  
Grapple with form and function  
Find a humble pedagogue.

A mind to expand your horizons  
To cultivate prismatic eyes  
For life’s web of subtle relations  
Partialize to synthesize.

Repetition now yields connection  
The big picture starts making sense  
Forsake illusions of perfection  
Grasp the mantra of persistence.

Yet know the wisdom of letting go  
A time for waste ain't a waste of time.  
Maybe not an infinite virtue, but  
Patience brings forth the sublime.

Mastery, mastery  
The spirit is the cosmos  
That must be free.  
Mastery, mastery  
The spirit is the cosmos  
That must be free.  
The serenity of mastery  
Reveals the depths  
Of inner space.  
And with mastery of serenity  
The payoff is amazing grace.

So mastery stays a mystery  
A rising and setting sun  
"The Eight 'P' Path" is an Odyssey  
To be chosen again and again.

Mastery, mastery  
The body is a sanctum  
Do you agree?  
Our mind is the canvas  
So let it be  
The spirit is the cosmos  
That must be free.

Mastery, mastery  
The more you know  
It's a mystery  
The more you know  
It's a mystery.

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*Shrink Rap Productions*

### Mountain Vision

by Mark Gorkin, LICSW, "The Stress Doc"

A few months after a hiking vacation in the Smoky Mountains, I began to write an inner visualization/poetic lyric about my spiritual connection with mountains. I had a few lines, mostly capturing a physical presence -- sculpted peaks (actually, more The Matterhorn and The Grand Tetons than The Smokys) green valleys, ice blue streams, etc. I decided to show the initial sketch to a friend who dabbled in songwriting. He liked what he read but bluntly suggested, "Throw in a relationship." "A relationship?," I cried out. "This is my ode to nature, to the purity of spirit, to the great mystery." I didn't want to sully the work's essence with something as mundane as a relationship!

Of course, I was being defensive. (Can't remember if I was in a relationship at the time.) Gradually, his challenge crawled under my mental block and started gnawing at my heart and mind. While initially disoriented, his remark actually motivated me to grapple with a more complex and, ultimately, more meaningful creative problem: the parallels between climbing a mountain and building a loving bond. "Mountain Vision" was and is the answer:

### Mountain Vision

Close your eyes for a journey  
A deep breath to unwind  
Now contemplate a mountain  
The mountain of your mind.

Sculpted peaks, green valleys  
The rush of ice blue streams  
Sway to the cosmic ebb and flow  
The rhythm of your dreams.

You're not a solo traveller  
This is a trip for two  
Can you climb together?  
Will you make it through?

Higher and higher  
Can you aspire?  
Lighter and lighter  
Spirit afire  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire?  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire.

Put aside all questions  
Let your mind be free.  
Just step into the mirror  
Let go...and follow me.  
We begin in the forest  
Enchanted beyond time.  
Its dance of light and shadow  
Primeval and sublime.

The forest as the artist  
Trees willowy and bold  
The brushstrokes of the branches  
Leaves afire red and gold.

And then God-like fingers  
Stream down from above  
Solar rays caress you both  
A touch of nature's love.

Higher and higher  
Can you aspire?  
Lighter and lighter  
Spirit afire  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire?  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire.

Have you found your Eden?  
Or have you lost your will?  
To build a loving lasting bond  
You must go higher still?

So head upstream, the gentle stream  
The babbling soothes your brain  
A crystal clear reflection  
To find yourself again.

Suddenly, black moody sky  
The wind shakes trees and roars  
The rain and thunder crashing down  
The wolf is at the door.

A fearful growl: "Go back!  
Or beware this tempest  
Adjust to the plateau life  
Give up your childish quest."

Old pain begins to erupt  
Your soulful streams pour forth  
To blend as soulful fusion  
Igniting light and faith.

You radiate an aura  
The storm soon starts to ease  
A howling psyche transformed  
Now two phoenix on the rise.

Higher and higher  
Can you aspire?  
Lighter and lighter  
Spirit afire  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire?  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire.

Soar above the tree line...Look  
A serpentine waterfall  
With mist soaked pastel rock-face  
Rainbow rock-face...magical.

Onward past the snowline  
To the windswept peak  
A swirl of endless flurries  
As if homage to your feat.

An oh so splendid silence  
Defies the spoken word  
A moment of transcendence  
A oneness with the world.

So two alone together  
Now embrace the humbling view:  
To envision higher power  
Both within and outside you.

Higher and higher  
You can aspire  
Lighter and lighter  
Spirit afire  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire  
Deeper and deeper  
Beyond desire.

The Stress Doc examines the purpose and power of reconstructing elusive memory through creative writing. His mission: to speculatively fill in the gaps or "lacunae" between conscious recall (limited) and subterranean, early childhood emotions and events (seemingly unlimited possibilities). The deductive use of later recall seeds emotion, memory, and imagination.

### Mining the Depths of Creative Memory

The recent decision to write a poetic allegory was motivated by a fairly unique challenge: reconstructing the dynamics of individual and family life during an early childhood period that for the most part eludes conscious memory. Of course, early memory and its psychological charge is not fixed or static. One controversial arena involves previously unrecalled memories emerging for adults during the course of therapy, or when triggered by an emotional event. Is it "real" or faux memory? Does the memory depict an actual occurrence or more one's sense of a psychological context? I believe memory is ever-changing based on a variety of factors, including overall present mood/mental state and work-life satisfaction. Drilling down, one's sense of personal efficacy and social connection and support (or lack thereof) in the present often shapes the emotional hues of memory. (Of course, there are some historical-horrific events many never want to forget – Never Again! – for the sake of individual-communal survival. Yet, numbers of people try to place those same events in perpetual hibernation; others are active deniers).

### The Subjective Nature of Memory

Let me elaborate on memory shaping. If memory is basically subjective, then it becomes like a Thematic Apperception Test: what we recall or perceive, the interpretation we make of the image or event, is dependent on a host of influential – historical-psychological-life in the moment-life in the future – factors. Memory becomes a story we tell ourselves. And like most stories, the story line and the meaning we bestow upon our past experience, is malleable. Even if "the facts" remain, the analysis of those facts, the import we provide or significance we take, is subject to change. We shed light on certain parts of the story, the rest remain in shadows. Sometimes, with increased understanding, the spotlight and actors reverse positions and roles. The fluidity of recall and explanation becomes increasingly evident as we evolve or regress emotionally in the present. And surely, "letting go" and the subsequent reframing of acutely painful or traumatic events and memories, can take considerable "head work, heart work, and homework."

### The Melancholy Memory Desert

Personally, creative writing is proving to be a vital tool for memory-crafting and meaning-making. Allowing my head and heart to quietly drift back into a mostly subconscious time and place, a wistful yet almost mysterious space, evokes a somewhat hazy, melancholy mood. My first ten years is a mostly arid memory desert. As I try to wander through it, some prickly memory-cacti appear, but mostly I feel lost; very little sense of being an evolving, life-shaping actor. In fact, when engaging a fleeting recall of events, aversive flashes far outweigh positive ones. (For example, I've written about one such blurred memory: the shame of my father's unsuccessful and, likely impatient, effort to teach me to ride a bike. Email stressdoc@aol.com for the poem, "The Silent Wall of Shame.") From reading I've done, early childhood trauma or chronic stress levels can significantly disrupt memory consolidation and recall. In addition to few clear memories, pervasive childhood and teen years angst and escapist numbing, along with difficulty concentrating and studying, resulting in underachievement in public school, seems to support the findings.

### Soulful, Mindful, and Twainful Discovery and Design

Another instructive analogy is depicting creative writing as descending into and exploring, selecting and extracting bits of a memory images from your personal memory mine. As Nobel Prize-winning writer, Albert Camus, noted: *In order to be created, a work of art must first make use of the dark forces of the soul.* Sometimes current ideas help shape the subterranean soul search; sometimes evocative memory extractions stimulate a conscious problem to solve or highlight a possible path for mindfully marching or merely meandering or daydreaming. Infusing the present idea or image with emotional memory and imagination also may spark unexpected connections among diverse elements...You just may have discovered a potentially prized gem. As Mark Twain observed: *Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which before their union were not perceived to have any relation.* Of course, this newfound ore typically requires intentional play and fine polish before achieving precious – beautiful and insightful – status. Discovery and design, daring and determination...not only a 4-"D" process for artfully transforming emotional lemon into lemonade. Four "D" an opportunity to do quiet, reflective grieving and reach greater acceptance. The emotional pain enveloping a memory now placed in a new cognitive frame and life affirming-poetic structure provides "higher power" purpose and meaning. The past becomes creative prologue. Finally, might we speculate that the aforementioned 4-"D" process is a way of consciously and holistically integrating (in real time) memory-presence-imagination in myriad facets of being human: perhaps a template for a purpose- and passion-driven life.

**Volume 7 Issue 2 February 2018**

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