

Energy, Patterns, and Mindfulness

By Aaron Schlosser

When someone receives Tao, they are typically encouraged to focus more on the spiritual energy behind the material world, and to break behavioral patterns. This is because karma typically manifests as a repeated pattern, and the effect of following the pattern is that we habitually lose positive spiritual and physical energy. Therefore, paying attention to our energy levels and recognizing patterns in our lives is an important tool for recognizing the karmic challenges we must face. This takes practice and effort. One important technique to assist in this effort is to keep a journal, writing down what we do every day and how we feel.

When I began to keep a journal, one of the first things I noticed was that my memory was terrible. I would have to struggle at the end of the day to remember what I ate for lunch! I had been living so thoughtlessly stuck in my karmic routine that my daily activities never left much of an impression on my memory. From moment to moment, my thoughts would be somewhere else, speculating about the future, rehashing the past, full of anxiety about one or the other, I was rarely alive and aware in the present moment. My karma was driving the car, and I had been asleep in the backseat.

I also began to realize that my memory and awareness were bad in part because I did not want to see or remember how poorly I treated myself and others. I would eat junk, treat strangers rudely; I was lazy, selfish and so on. No wonder I didn't want to remember what I did from day to day! However, I had received Tao shortly before I began keeping my journal, and I was already starting to see things more clearly. I felt like my soul had returned home to my life to find it was being neglected and abused. I realized that I needed to struggle to take back control of my mind and body.



Dealing with karma requires a strategy. It requires spiritual merit and knowledge to ultimately overcome a karmic pattern. It takes energy to accrue spiritual merit and knowledge. Karmic patterns consistently use up our energy. So we must first focus on karmic patterns that are within our ability to change first, so that we can build up the energy we need to turn the car around.



The first step was to simply be more aware of what I was doing, no matter how awful it was. I had to at least get in the passenger's seat of the car to see where my karma was driving me. I noticed that as I increased my awareness my memory also began to improve, and it became easier to record my daily activities in my journal.

Since I had not been driving the "car" in so long, I needed to practice. Breaking small, seemingly insignificant patterns is important in the sense that for a moment, we get in the driver's seat. Instead of passively living our lives, we participate and actively change things in hopes of finding better solutions. It is a skill we need to develop through practice.

So I started off with striving to be more conscious of everything I ate or drank, not only during meals, but also when I was snacking. I noticed that if I ate a large variety of foods, it was harder to figure out how each different food affected my energy. So I simplified my diet. I stopped snacking as much. Each meal was a controlled experiment. Reducing the variables helped me see the connection between cause and effect more clearly. Since this technique worked with food, I decided to apply it to other aspects of my life.

To learn how much my relationships with friends and family affected my energy, I started to spend more time alone. By reducing the variables I was able to see the effects of my relationships on my energy. Some of them seemed to greatly decrease my energy or make me lose my lucidity. I decided that I would stop contacting some people until I was stronger and more secure in the new path I had taken. This did not mean I wanted to end my relationships with these people, nor did it mean that they wished to really attack me in any way, but I had only just begun to practice Tao, so I was vulnerable and needed to defend myself from losing my energy and falling back into my mindless routine. I knew

that if I ever wanted to have enough energy to transform unhealthy relationships into healthy ones, I needed to conserve my energy. So for the time being, I would keep my distance.

As I reduced the possible sources of energy loss, I also explored areas of improvement that I had not previously recognized. I started to experiment with doing things differently. I would try giving something up or changing a habit for a month or longer to see how it would change how I felt. If I felt a positive difference, I would not return to my old habits. I cut out coffee, I woke up earlier so I wouldn't have to rush through breakfast, I stopped complaining about work with my co-workers, I stopped reading the horrid stories in the newspaper, I stopped wearing black clothing, I ate walnuts with breakfast every morning, I stopped cooking with garlic and onions, I kept my apartment cleaner, I walked home instead of squeezing into the rush-hour subway, and so on. Some of the experiments were suggested to me by my teacher, a lot of which sounded ludicrous to me, but once I gave it a try and felt the difference for myself, I had to believe it. I documented the results in my journal, and the lessons I learned were much more deeply felt because I experienced the effects first-hand.

As I simplified my life I discovered that my journal entries actually became longer and more insightful. My life was not full of so much mindless junk, and my ability to see things more clearly and have the energy to understand and record that information increased. I became more sensitive to the energetic baggage of things, and this helped me make better decisions and grow faster.

I also found it very helpful to have friends in the Tao family who took the time to talk to me when I was struggling to stay on track. I was fortunate enough to have a long-time trusted friend already in the Tao family who understood how hard the first stages of changing one's life can be, having been through it recently himself. Without their love, wisdom, energy, and patience to fall back on when I was weak and confused, I don't know how I would have made it through the first few months. I also recognize that if I had not put up the effort to call them and engage them in my development, I would have probably fallen back into my old pattern. The effort I put into keeping a journal, becoming more mindful of my patterns and my energy, and frequently "checking in" with my friends and teachers in the Tao family made all the difference. The Tao practice and the Tao family provided the tools and the unique opportunity for growth, and thankfully I made the most of it.

