

from their nightmares. Do the reverse. Throw a bash in which everyone is invited to arrive dressed as a character from the most glorious dream they remember.

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6. When many people talk about their childhoods, they emphasize the alienating, traumatic experiences they had, and fail to report the good times. This seems dishonest—a testament to the popularity of cynicism rather than a reflection of objective truth.

I don't mean to downplay the way your early encounters with pain demoralized your spirit. But as you reconnoiter the promise of pronoia, it's crucial for you to extol the gifts you were given in your early years: all the helpful encounters, kind teachings, and simple acts of grace that helped you bloom.

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7. What is the holiest river in the world? Some might say the Ganges in India. Others would propose the Jordan River or the River Nile. But I say the holiest river is the one that's closest to where you are right now.

Go to that river and commune with it. Throw a small treasure into it as an offering. Next, find a holy sidewalk to walk on, praise the holiness in a bus driver, kiss a holy tree, and shop at a holy store.

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8. Go to the ugliest or most forlorn place you know -- a drugstore parking lot, the front porch of a crack house, a toxic waste dump, or the place that symbolizes your secret shame -- and build a shrine devoted to beauty, truth, and love.

Here are some suggestions about what to put in your shrine: a silk scarf; a smooth rock on which you've inscribed a haiku or joke with a felt-tip pen; coconut cookies or ginger candy; pumpkin seeds and an origami crane; a green kite shaped like a dragon; a music CD you love; a photo of your hero; a votive candle carved with your word of power; a rubber ducky; a bouquet of fresh beets; a print of Van Gogh's Starry Night.

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9. Become a rapturist, which is the opposite of a terrorist: Conspire to unleash blessings on unsuspecting recipients, causing them to feel good.

Before bringing your work as a rapturist to strangers, practice with two close companions. Offer them each a gift that fires up their ambitions. It should not be a practical necessity or consumer fetish, but rather a provocative tool or toy. Give them an imaginative boon they've been hesitant to ask for, a beautiful thing that expands their self-image, a surprising intervention that says, "I love the way you move me."

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The above is excerpted from "Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia: How the Whole World Is Conspiring to Shower You with Blessings" - bit.ly/PowellsPronoia or bit.ly/Pronoia

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WANT TO GET YOUR ASTROLOGICAL CHART READ?

If you want your personal chart done, I recommend a colleague whose approach to reading astrology charts closely matches my own. She's my wife, RO LOUGHRAN. She's at www.roloughran.com.

Ro utilizes a blend of well-trained intuition, emotional warmth, and technical proficiency in horoscope interpretation. She is skilled at exploring the mysteries of your life's purpose and nurturing your connection with your own inner wisdom.

In addition to over 30 years of astrological experience, Ro has been a licensed psychotherapist for 17 years. She integrates psychological insight with astrology's cosmological perspective.

Ro is based in California, but can do phone consultations and otherwise work with you regardless of geographic boundaries.

Check out Ro's website at www.roloughran.com

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TELLING YOUR OWN STORY

The ability to tell your own story, in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt.

—Rebecca Solnit

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HUMAN BIOLOGY HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY

Human biology has changed dramatically in the past three centuries, says Nobel Prize-winning

economic historian Robert Fogel -- and especially in the last 100 years. People in the developed world live twice as long as they used to. They weigh more and grow taller. They're far hardier and healthier and smarter. When sickness comes, they're better at defeating it than their ancestors were, and they're not as likely to contract diseases in the first place.

"We're just not falling apart like we used to," says Fogel. "Even our internal organs are stronger and better formed." What has occurred is "not only unique to humankind, but unique among the 7,000 or so generations of human beings who have inhabited the earth."

We're talking about a revolution. In the mid-19th century, Americans of all ages were much sicker than they are now. Child mortality was almost 25 percent, and of those kids lucky enough to survive into adolescence, 15 percent more expired before age 15. Chronic malnutrition was a horrendous curse, compromising immune systems from birth.

During the Civil War, one-sixth of the teenagers who applied to serve in the Union army were rejected because of chronic ailments like malaria, tuberculosis, arthritis, cardiovascular problems, and hernias. As for the older folks, the average ex-soldier in his 60s had at least six health problems, four more than a sexagenarian is likely to have today.

What happened between then and now? First, we harnessed electricity, made it universally available, and used it in a myriad ways to improve our lot. All of the other boons I'm about to name -- improvements in our diet, medicine, sanitation, and workload -- were organized around this fantastic, unprophesied new resource.

Our relationship with food has changed dramatically in the last century and a half. We discovered more accurate information about our nutritional needs and gained access to a greater variety and abundance of food. The perfection of the science of refrigeration and the eventual universal availability of refrigerators made a big difference, too. Victory over widespread malnutrition meant that infants got a better start on building strong bodies, making them less susceptible to sickness throughout the course of their lives.

The drastic upgrade in the state of the human body was also made possible by steadily growing medical expertise, including the discovery of the germ theory of disease and radical new treatments like antibiotics and vaccination. Physicians got better training, large numbers of new hospitals opened, and more people made medicine their career. Among the diseases that were wiped out were diphtheria, typhoid, cholera, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, smallpox, and polio.

Innovations in sanitation have been key to the upgrades in the way our bodies work. Everything and everyone are far cleaner than they used to be. People bathe more frequently and devote more attention to their hygiene. Among the most important developments in this triumph were two practical miracles: indoor plumbing and the installation of municipal sewer systems.

It took a while. As late as 1920, only one in 100 American homes had a toilet or even a bathroom -- outhouses were standard -- and toilet paper was a luxury. For those few with bathtubs, a full-body cleanse was often a once-a-week ritual, and entire families might use the same bathwater. Fogel says that even into the early 1900s, "Chicago exported a lot of typhoid down to St. Louis," by disposing wastewater in the Illinois River.

Garbage disposal used to be a hit-and-miss proposition until the 20th century. Private citizens might bury their refuse in their backyards, take it to public incinerators, or offer it to pigs at local farms. But eventually, local governments took over the task. During my lifetime, every city where I've lived has done a stellar job of hauling my trash away.

In the middle of the 19th century, the average American worked 78 hours a week, often at exhausting manual labor and without the help of machines. As work became easier and of shorter duration, our health soared. Technological aids like washing machines and automatic heating systems also contributed to the rising tide of physical well-being.

All of the improvements I've mentioned have flourished because of the most important change of all: greater wealth and more available resources. Despite periodic economic downturns, per capita income in the developing nations has grown enormously in the last 150 years. Elsewhere, too: Wealth in India and China has doubled since 1989, according to The Economist magazine. As a result, more of us have been able to afford to take better care of ourselves. And more of us have been able to do the research and experimentation and development that advance the common good.

Even poor people are better off than they used to be. During the 17 years when my annual income was less than \$10,000, well below the official poverty line, I had many amenities the average American didn't have in 1900: electricity, telephone, bathtub, toilet, hot running water, refrigerator, radio, electric hotplate, space heater, TV, cassette player, shampoo, public transportation, asthma medicine, access to a laundromat, garbage collection, and sewer system.

The above is excerpted from "Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia: How the Whole World Is Conspiring to Shower You with Blessings" - bit.ly/PowellsPronoia or bit.ly/Pronoia

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I got what I needed instead of what I wanted and that's just about the best kind of luck you can have.

—Cormac McCarthy

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MORE PRONOIA RESOURCES:

US green economy has 10 times more jobs than the fossil fuel industry
tinyurl.com/y3axgzrb

California's Sausalito Marin City District return to session this August, they will be the first in the nation to serve their students 100 percent organic meals and sustainably sourced.
tinyurl.com/y2njfdyc

Trees Are Healing Our Planet. A recent study found that new forests might be our best shot at saving the world.
tinyurl.com/yxjd7h9k

(Note: I endorse these because I like them. They aren't advertisements, and I get no kickbacks.)

Please tell me your own nominations for PRONOIA RESOURCES: Truthrooster@gmail.com.

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY
Week beginning November 14

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SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

Poet Robert Bly tells us that the door to the soul is unlocked. You don't have to struggle through any special machinations to open it or go through it. Furthermore, the realm of the soul is always ready for you. Always! It harbors the precise treasure you need in order to be replenished and empowered. I bring this to your attention, Scorpio, because I think that during the next two weeks, you should abide as much as possible in the soul's realm—the cornucopia of holy truths and ever-fresh riches.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

In my estimation, what you've experienced lately has been akin to a fermentation process. It's as if you're undergoing a transformation with resemblances to the way that grapes turn into wine or milk becomes yogurt or dough rises before being baked into bread. You may have had to endure some discomfort, which is the case for anything in the midst of substantial change. But I think you'll ultimately be quite pleased with the results, which I expect will be ready no later than ten days after your birthday—and quite possibly sooner.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

Many books have been written about Joan of Arc, a fifteenth-century teenage peasant girl whose improbable ascent to military leadership, under the guidance of her divine visions, was crucial in France's victory over the English. Among the many miraculous elements of her story was the fact that less than a year before she led troops into battle on horseback, she didn't know how to ride a horse. She learned by riding around her father's farm astride his cows. I foresee an equivalent marvel in your future, Capricorn. By this time next year, you will have developed an aptitude that might seem unimaginable now. (P.S. There's evidence Joan was a Capricorn.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

The *Divine Comedy* is one of history's greatest literary works. Its author, Dante Alighieri, was 43 when he began writing the *Inferno*, the first part of his three-part masterpiece. Up until that time, he had published just one book and a few poems, and had also abandoned work on two unfinished books. Early on in the *Inferno*, the not-yet-renowned author presents a fictional scene in which he meets with the spirits of antiquity's most famous authors: Virgil, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. Those illustrious five tell Dante he is such an important writer that he ranks sixth, after them, in his excellence. I'm going to encourage you to dare indulging in behavior like Dante's: to visualize and extol—and yes, even brag about—the virtues and skills that will ultimately be your signature contribution to this world.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

The Latin word for sea is *mare*. *Flustra* is the calm sea. *Undisonus* means "resounding with waves." *Caeruleus* is the sea's deep shade of blue, *aestus* is the tide, and *aequoreus* means "connected with the sea." My hope is that as you meditate on these lyrical terms, you'll be moved to remember the first lakes, rivers, and oceans you ever swam in. You'll recall your time floating in your mother's womb and your most joyous immersions in warm baths and hot springs. Why? It's a favorable time to seek the healing and rejuvenating powers of primal waters—both metaphorically and literally.

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

If there are any potential Aries heroes or leaders or saviors out there, the coming weeks will be a favorable time for you to fully bloom and assert your practical magnificence. The lessons you have learned while improvising workable solutions for yourself are ripe to be applied to the riddles that are puzzling your tribe or group or gang. I want to let you know, however, that to achieve maximum effectiveness, you should be willing to do good deeds for people who may not be able to pay you back.

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OUR COLLABORATION

I really do feel that you're here with me as I create these horoscopes. In a sense, you're my assistant. Our telepathic connection is utterly palpable and practical. The hopes and questions you project my way stream into my higher mind, coloring my psychic environment and enriching my desire to give you exactly what you need.

If you ever want more inspiration generated in that same collaborative spirit -- beyond the horoscopes you're reading here -- keep in mind that every week I also offer EXPANDED AUDIO HOROSCOPES for you. They're four-to-five-minute meditations on the current state of your destiny.

These forecasts are different in tone and format from the written horoscopes you read here in the newsletter. They're longer and more leisurely in tone.

To listen to your Expanded Audio Horoscope online, go to freewillastrology.sparkns.com

Register and/or log in through the main page.

You can also listen over the phone by calling 1-877-873-4888.

The cost is \$6 per sign on the On the Web. (Discounts are available for bulk purchases.) You can also access them for \$1.99 per minute by phone

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"Your Expanded Audio Horoscopes seem to have the effect of activating my inner teacher. Thanks!" - Eleanor A., Toronto

"Your expanded audio horoscopes are the next best thing to actually having you here next to me to remind me who I really am." - Alyssa R., Des Moines, Iowa

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TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

You're entering a phase of your astrological cycle when it's crucial that your receptivity be as robust as possible. To guide you in this delightful but perhaps challenging work, here are good questions for you to pose. 1. Do you know what help and support you need most, and are you brave and forthright enough to ask for it? 2. Is there any part of you, perhaps unconscious, that believes you don't deserve gifts and blessings? 3. Do you diligently cultivate your capacity to be refreshed and restored? 4. Are you eagerly responsive when life surprises you with learning experiences and inspirations?

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

"Many people will not be honest because they fear loss of intimacy and togetherness," writes self-help author Henry Cloud. But the truth, he adds, is that "honesty brings people closer together," because it "strengthens their identities." Therein lies the tender paradox: "The more you realize your separate identities, the closer you can become." Living according to this principle may not be as easy or convenient as being deceptive and covert, but it's ultimately more gratifying. Henry Cloud concludes, "Telling loved ones what is really on your mind and telling others what you really think is the foundation of love."

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

"Maturity is having the ability to escape categorization," said poet Kenneth Rexroth. That's the opposite of the conventional wisdom. For many people, the process of growing up and becoming a seasoned adult means trying to fit in, to find one's category, to be serious and steady and stable. Rexroth, on the other hand, suggested that when you fully ripen into your potentials, you transcend standard definitions; you don't adhere to others' expectations; you are uniquely yourself, outside and beyond all pigeonholes and classifications. The coming weeks will be an excellent time for you to practice and cultivate this sacred art.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

Is there an event from your past that would be empowering for you to remember in detail? Is there a neglected but still viable dream you could resurrect, thereby energizing your enthusiasm for the future? Are there old allies you've lost touch with but who, if you called on them, could provide you with just the boost you need? Is there a familiar pleasure you've grown numb to but could reinvigorate by visualizing the original reasons you loved it? The coming weeks will be a favorable time to meditate on these questions.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

Catholic saint St. Francis (1181-1226) loved animals and the natural world. According to one folkloric tale, he was once traveling on foot with several companions when they came upon a place where the trees were filled with birds. Francis said, "Wait for me while I go preach to my sisters the birds." He proceeded to do just that. The birds were an attentive audience for the duration of his sermon, apparently captivated by his tender tones. Seven centuries later, author Rebecca West offered a critique of the bird-whisperer. "Did St. Francis preach to the birds?" she asked. "Whatever for? If he really liked birds he would have done better to preach to the cats." In the coming weeks, Virgo, I encourage you to do the metaphorical equivalent of preaching to both the birds and the cats.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

Every now and then I authorize you Libras to shed your polite, tactful personas and express the angst you sometimes feel but usually hide. That's now! To egg you on, read this mischievous rant by Libran blogger Clary Gay (claryfightwood.tumblr.com): "We Libras are constantly thinking about how to make everyone else comfortable and happy. There's not a minute going by when we're not worrying about radiating a soothing and comforting aura so everyone can have a good time. If a Libra is cranky, it's because they snapped! Because of some non-Libra who doesn't appreciate them! If a Libra is mean to people, it's their own damn fault!"

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HOMEWORK:

"How easy it is to make people happy when you don't want or need anything from them," said Gail Godwin. Give an example. FreeWillAstrology.com

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Submissions sent to Rob Brezsny's Astrology Newsletter or in response to "homework assignments" may be published in a variety of formats at Rob Brezsny's discretion, including but not limited to newsletters, books, the Free Will Astrology column, and Free Will Astrology website. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, style, and content. Requests for anonymity will be honored. We are not responsible for unsolicited submission of any creative material.

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