

power to make us smarter. Pain frequently generates no gain. We're all prone to become habituated, even addicted, to nagging vexations that go on and on without rousing any of our sleeping genius.

There is, furthermore, another class of difficulty--let's call it the delightful dilemma--that neither feeds on angst nor generates it. On the contrary, it's fun and invigorating, and usually blooms when you're feeling a profound sense of being at home in the world. The problem of writing my book is a good example. I've had a good time handling the perplexing challenges with which it has confronted me.

Imagine a life in which at least half of your quandaries match this profile. Act as if you're most likely to attract useful problems when joy is your predominant state of mind. Consider the possibility that being in unsettling circumstances may shrink your capacity to dream up the riddles you need most; that maybe it's hard to ask the best questions when you're preoccupied fighting rearguard battles against boring or demeaning annoyances that have plagued you for many moons.

Prediction: As an aspiring lover of pronoia, you will have a growing knack for gravitating toward wilder, wetter, more interesting problems. More and more, you will be drawn to the kind of gain that doesn't require pain. You'll be so alive and awake that you'll cheerfully push yourself out of your comfort zone in the direction of your personal frontier well before you're forced to do so by divine kicks in the ass.

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ETERNAL WELCOME

"Some people have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy."

- Abraham H. Maslow

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TWO KINDS OF HOPE

Sometimes hope is an irrelevant waste of time, even a stupid self-indulgence. Let's say, for instance, that I'm intently hoping that a certain disagreeable person I've got to communicate with won't answer when I call on the phone. That way I can simply leave a message on his voice mail and avoid an unpleasant exchange. But it doesn't matter what I hope. The guy will either answer or not, regardless of what I hope.

But there is another kind of hope that's potentially invigorating. Let's say I hope that we humans will reverse the environmental catastrophes we're perpetrating. Let's say that my hope motivates me to live more sustainably and to inspire others to live more sustainably. Then my hope is a catalyst.

I invite you to give two examples from your life about the two kinds of hope.

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BEGINNER'S MIND AND BEGINNER'S HEART

To achieve what the Zen Buddhists call "beginner's mind," you dispense with all preconceptions and enter each situation as if seeing it for the first time. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities," wrote Shunryu Suzuki in his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, "but in the expert's there are few."

As much as I love beginner's mind, though, I advocate an additional discipline: cultivating a beginner's heart. That means approaching every encounter imbued with a freshly invoked wave of love that is as pure as if you're feeling it for the first time.

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HOW TO FIND GOOD NEWS

Experiment: Imprint yourself with the intention that, say, 25% of the time, you will seek out the GOOD news instead of the BAD stuff -- that you will regard tales of affliction and mayhem and corruption and tragedy as no more interesting or worthy of your attention than tales of triumph and liberation and pleasure and ingenuity.

If this idea appeals to you, here are sources of GOOD news to get you started:

Yes magazine: yesmagazine.org

Good News Network: goodnewsnetwork.org

Celebrate Small Victories: celebratesmallvictories.com/archives

Reddit Uplifting News: reddit.com/r/UpliftingNews

New York Times' Good News section: tinyurl.com/y88vclz

Heroic Stories: heroicstories.com

(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 August 2

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LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

"Sometimes, I feel the past and the future pressing so hard on either side that there's no room for the present at all." A character named Julia says that in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*. I bring it to your attention as an inspiring irritant, as a prod to get you motivated. I hope it will mobilize you to rise up and refuse to allow your past and your future to press so hard on either side that there's no room for the present. It's a favorable time for you to fully claim the glory of being right here, right now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

I'm not an ascetic who believes all our valuable lessons emerge from suffering. Nor am I a pop-nihilist who sneers at pretty flowers, smiling children, and sunny days. On the contrary: I'm devoted to the hypothesis that life is usually at least 51 percent wonderful. But I dance the rain dance when there's an emotional drought in my personal life, and I dance the pain dance when it's time to deal with difficulties I've ignored. How about you, Virgo? I suspect that now is one of those times when you need to have compassionate heart-to-heart conversations with your fears, struggles, and aches.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

Do you absolutely need orchids, sweet elixirs, dark chocolate, alluring new music, dances on soft grass, sensual massages, nine hours of sleep per night, and a steady stream of soulful conversations? No. Not really. In the coming days, life will be a good ride for you even if you fail to procure those indulgences. But here are further questions and answers: Do you *deserve* the orchids, elixirs, and the rest? My answer is yes, definitely. And would the arrival of these delights spur you to come up with imaginative solutions to your top two riddles? I'm pretty sure it would. So I conclude this horoscope by recommending that you do indeed arrange to revel in your equivalent of the delights I named.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

"Don't try to steer the river," writes Deepak Chopra. Most of the time, I agree with that idea. It's arrogant to think that we have the power to control the forces of nature or the flow of destiny or the song of creation. Our goal should be to get an intuitive read on the crazy-making miracle of life, and adapt ourselves ingeniously to its ever-shifting patterns and rhythms. But wait! Set aside everything I just said. An exception to the usual rule has arrived. Sometimes, when your personal power is extra flexible and robust -- like now, for you -- you may indeed be able to steer the river a bit.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

"Dear Astrologer: Recently I've been weirdly obsessed with wondering how to increase my levels of generosity and compassion. Not just because I know it's the right thing to do, but also because I know it will make me healthy and honest and unflappable. Do you have any sage advice? - Ambitious Sagittarius." Dear Ambitious: I've noticed that many Sagittarians are feeling an unprecedented curiosity about how to enhance their lives by boosting the benevolence they express. Here's a tip from astrologer Chani Nicholas: "Source your sense of self from your integrity in every interaction." Here's another tip from Anais Nin: "The worse the state of the world grows, the more intensely I try for inner perfection and power. I fight for a small world of humanity and tenderness."

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

Time does not necessarily heal all wounds. If you wait around passively, hoping that the mere passage of months will magically fix your twists and smooth out your tweaks, you're shirking your responsibility. The truth is, you need to be fully engaged in the process. You've got to feel deeply and think hard about how to diminish your pain, and then take practical action when your wisdom shows you what will actually work. Now is an excellent time to upgrade your commitment to this sacred quest.

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FREE STUFF!

Here are links to more of the free stuff I offer:

bit.ly/ReadExcerpts: Lots of excerpts from my book *Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia: How the Whole World Is Conspiring to Shower You with Blessings*

bit.ly/ZenLovePunk: My Facebook page

bit.ly/ZenLoveZenLove: My Youtube page

bit.ly/PunkZenLove: My Soundcloud page. Listen to and download my music and spoken-word pieces

bit.ly/LoveZenPunk: My Twitter page

bit.ly/LovePunkZen: My Instagram page

bit.ly/LoveLoveZen: Links to interviews with me

bit.ly/ZenLoveZen: My Tumblr page

bit.ly/PunkPunkZen: My Weekly Newsletter archive

bit.ly/ZenPunkZen: My band's homepage

bit.ly/TrueSongs: My band's songs

bit.ly/YourGloriousStory2018: The long-term, big-picture horoscopes I wrote for you at the beginning of 2018

bit.ly/FirstChapters: Read the first four chapters of my book *The Televisionary Oracle*

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AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

The questions you've been asking aren't bad or wrong. But they're not exactly relevant or helpful, either. That's why the answers you've been receiving aren't of maximum use. Try these questions instead. 1. What experience or information would you need to heal your divided sense of loyalty? 2. How can you attract an influence that would motivate you to make changes you can't quite accomplish under your own power? 3. Can you ignore or even dismiss the 95 percent of your fear that's imaginary so you'll be able to focus on the five percent that's truly worth meditating on? 4. If I assured you that you have the intelligence to beautify an ugly part of your world, how would you begin?

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

A scuffle you've been waging turns out to be the wrong scuffle. It has distracted you from giving your full attention to a more winnable and worthwhile tussle. My advice? Don't waste energy feeling remorse about the energy you've wasted. In fact, be grateful for the training you've received. The skills you've been honing while wrestling with the misleading complication will serve you well when you switch your focus to the more important issue. So are you ready to shift gears? Start mobilizing your crusade to engage with the more winnable and worthwhile tussle.

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

I predict that August will be a Golden Age for you. That's mostly very good. Golden opportunities will arise, and you'll come into possession of lead that can be transmuted into gold. But it's also important to be prudent about your dealings with gold. Consider the fable of the golden goose. The bird's owner grew impatient because it laid only one gold egg per day; he foolishly slaughtered his prize animal to get all the gold immediately. That didn't work out well. Or consider the fact that to the ancient Aztecs, the word *teocuitlatl* referred to gold, even though its literal translation was "excrement of the gods." Moral of the story: If handled with care and integrity, gold can be a blessing.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

Taurus socialite Stephen Tennant (1906-1987) was such an interesting luminary that three major novelists created fictional characters modeled after him. As a boy, when he was asked what he'd like to be when he grew up, he replied, "I want to be a great beauty." I'd love to hear those words spill out of your mouth, Taurus. What? You say you're already all grown up? I doubt it. In my opinion, you've still got a lot of stretching and expansion and transformation to accomplish during the coming decades. So yes: I hope you can find it in your wild heart to proclaim, "When I grow up, I want to be a great beauty." (P.S. Your ability to become increasingly beautiful will be at a peak during the next fourteen months.)

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

"Manage with bread and butter until God sends the honey," advises a Moroccan proverb. Let's analyze how this advice might apply to you. First thing I want to know is, have you been managing well with bread and butter? Have you refrained from whining about your simple provisions, resting content and grateful? If you haven't, I doubt that any honey will arrive, ether from God or any other source. But if you have been celebrating your modest gifts, feeling free of greed and displeasure, then I expect at least some honey will show up soon.

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

Don't worry your beautiful head about praying to the gods of luck and fate. I'll take care of that for you. Your job is to propitiate the gods of fluid discipline and hard but smart work. To win the favor of these divine helpers, act on the assumption that you now have the power and the right to ask for more of their assistance than you have before. Proceed with the understanding that they are willing to provide you with the stamina, persistence, and attention to detail you will need to accomplish your next breakthrough.

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HOMEWORK:

What was your last major amazement? What do you predict will be the next one? Testify at FreeWillAstrology.com.

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Submissions sent to Rob Brezсны's Astrology Newsletter or in response to "homework assignments" may be published in a variety of formats at Rob Brezсны'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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