



Rob Brezsny's Astrology Newsletter
November 6, 2019
FreeWillAstrology.com

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Devotional Pronoia Therapy: Experiments and exercises in becoming a Master of Ecstatic Empathy

1. What causes happiness? Brainstorm about it. Map out the foundations of your personal science of joy. Get serious about defining what makes you feel good.

To get you started, I'll name some experiences that might rouse your gratification: engaging in sensual pleasure; seeking the truth; being kind and moral; contemplating the meaning of life; escaping your routine; purging pent-up emotions. Do any of these work for you? Name at least ten more.

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2. Are other people luckier than you? If so, psychologist Richard Wiseman says you can do something about it. His book *The Luck Factor* presents research that proves you can learn to be lucky. It's not a mystical force you're born with, he says, but a habit you can develop.

How? For starters, be open to new experiences, trust your gut wisdom, expect good fortune, see the bright side of challenging events, and master the art of maximizing serendipitous opportunities.

Name three specific actions you'll try in order to improve your luck.

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3. Useless suffering is the kind of suffering you're compulsively drawn back to over and over again out of habit. It's familiar, and thus perversely comfortable. Useful suffering is the kind of pain that surprises you with valuable teachings and inspires you to see the world with new eyes.

While useless suffering is often born of fear, wise suffering is typically stirred up by love. The dumb, unproductive stuff comes from allowing yourself to be controlled by your early conditioning and from doing things that are out of harmony with your essence. The useful variety arises out of an intention to approach life as an interesting work of art and uncanny game that's worthy of your curiosity.

Come up with two more definitions about the difference between dumb suffering and smart suffering.

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4. Write the following on a piece of red paper and keep it under your pillow. "I, [put your name here], do solemnly swear on this day, [put date here], that I will devote myself for a period of seven days to learning my most important desire. No other thought will be more uppermost in my mind. No other concern will divert me from tracking down every clue that might assist me in my drive to ascertain the one experience in this world that deserves my brilliant passion above all others."

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5. The primary meaning of the word "healing" is "to cure what's diseased or broken." Medical practitioners focus on sick people. Philanthropists donate their money and social workers contribute their time to helping the underprivileged. Psychotherapists wrestle with their clients' traumas and neuroses. I'm in awe of them all. The level of one's spiritual wisdom, I believe, is more accurately measured by helping people in need than by meditation skills, shamanic shapeshifting, supernatural powers, or esoteric knowledge.

But I also believe in a second kind of healing that is largely unrecognized: to supercharge what is already healthy; to lift up what's merely sufficient to a sublime state. Using this definition, describe two acts of healing: one you would enjoy performing on yourself and another you'd like to provide for someone you love.

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6. Is the world a dangerous, chaotic place with no inherent purpose, running on automatic like a malfunctioning machine and fundamentally inimical to your drive to find meaning? Or are you

surrounded by helpers in a friendly, enchanted universe that gives you challenges in order to make you smarter and wilder and kinder and trickier?

Trick questions! The answers may depend, at least to some degree, on what you believe is true.

Formulate a series of experiments that will allow you to objectively test the hypothesis that the universe is conspiring to help dissolve your ignorance and liberate you from your suffering.

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7. Those who explore pronia often find they have a growing capacity to help people laugh at themselves. While few arbiters of morality recognize this skill as a mark of high character, I put it near the top of my list. In my view, inducing people to take themselves less seriously is a supreme virtue.

Do you have any interest in cultivating it? How might you go about it?

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8. Computer programmer Garry Hamilton articulated the following "Game Rules." Give examples of how they have worked in your life.

1. If the game is rigged so you can't win, find another game or invent your own.
2. If you're not winning because you don't know the rules, learn the rules.
3. If you know the rules but aren't willing to follow them, there's either something wrong with the game or you need to change something in yourself.
4. Don't play the game in a half-baked way. Either get all the way in or all the way out.
5. It shouldn't be necessary for others to lose in order for you to win. If others have to lose, re-evaluate the game's goals.

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9. "There are two ways for a person to look for adventure," said the Lone Ranger, an old TV character. "By tearing everything down, or building everything up." Give an example of each from your own life.

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The above is excerpted from my book *PRONIA IS THE ANTIDOTE FOR PARANOIA*

It's available at Amazon: bit.ly/Pronia

or Powells: bit.ly/ProniaPowells

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HARRIET TUBMAN

I'm thrilled about the arrival of a film about the historical figure I admire most, Harriet Tubman:

tinyurl.com/yyyuntpc

One way to prepare for the film might be to look at this animated diagram about the Atlantic slave trade, which lasted for 315 years, involved 20,528 voyages, and kidnapped millions of people.

tinyurl.com/y4qdoczu

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After escaping from slavery in 1849, Harriet Tubman helped organize the Underground Railroad and personally led hundreds of slaves to freedom. Few history books choose to convey the fact that she often relied on her dreams to provide specific information about where to find safe houses, helpers, and passages through dangerous territory.

Read some of my writing about Harriet Tubman here: tinyurl.com/TubmanHeroics

And read Robert Moss's fine accounts of Harriet Tubman in his book *Dreaming True*.

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BLESSING IN THE CHAOS

by Jan Richardson

To all that is chaotic
in you,
let there come silence.

Let there be
a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,

some people who are now in your sphere will depart. Net result: stronger alliances and more collaboration.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

I blame and thank the Sagittarian part of me when I get brave and brazen enough to follow my strongest emotions where they want to lead me. I also blame and thank the Sagittarian part of me when I strip off my defense mechanisms and invite the world to regard my vulnerabilities as interesting and beautiful. I furthermore blame and thank the Sagittarian side of me on those occasions when I run three miles down the beach at dawn, hoping to thereby jolt loose the secrets I've been concealing from myself. I suspect the coming weeks will be a favorable time to blame and thank the Sagittarian part of you for similar experiences.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

Persian polymath Avicenna (980–1037) wrote 450 books on many topics, including medicine, philosophy, astronomy, geography, mathematics, theology, and poetry. While young, he tried to study the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, but had difficulty grasping it. Forty times he read the text, even committing it to memory. But he made little progress toward fathoming it. Years later, he was browsing at an outdoor market and found a brief, cheap book about the *Metaphysics* by an author named al-Farabi. He read it quickly, and for the first time understood Aristotle's great work. He was so delighted he went out to the streets and gave away gifts to poor people. I foresee a comparable milestone for you, Capricorn: something that has eluded your comprehension will become clear, at least in part due to a lucky accident.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

In addition to being a key figure in Renaissance art, fifteenth-century Italian painter Filippo Lippi had a colorful life. According to legend, he was once held prisoner by Barbary pirates, but gained his freedom by drawing a riveting portrait of their leader. Inspired by the astrological factors affecting you right now, I'm fantasizing about the possibility of a liberating event arriving in your life. Maybe you'll call on one of your skills in a dramatic way, thereby enhancing your leeway or generating a breakthrough or unleashing an opportunity. (Please also re-read your horoscope from last week.)

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

"Stand high long enough and your lightning will come," writes Piscean novelist William Gibson. He isn't suggesting that we literally stand on top of a treeless hill in a thunderstorm and invite the lightning to shoot down through us. More realistically, I think he means that we should devotedly cultivate and discipline our highest forms of expression so that when inspiration finds us, we'll be primed to receive and use its full power. That's an excellent oracle for you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

Aries psychologist James Hillman said we keep "our images and fantasies at arm's length because they are so full of love." They're also quite flammable, he added. They are always on the verge of catching fire, metaphorically speaking. That's why many people wrap their love-filled images and fantasies in metaphorical asbestos: to prevent them from igniting a blaze in their psyches. In my astrological opinion, you Aries folks always have a mandate to use less asbestos than all the other signs—even none at all. That's even truer than usual right now. Keep your images and fantasies extra close and raw and wild.

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WHY IS IT CALLED "FREE WILL" ASTROLOGY?

It's called Free Will Astrology because my goal is to create horoscopes that nurture your free will.

Contrary to what some horoscope fans believe, there's no such thing as predestination. Fate is a tricky sucker that keeps changing its mind about where it wants to go. The stars may impel, as the astrological saying goes, but they don't compel.

That's why I've never considered myself a fortuneteller. I prefer to think that my greatest service is as a psychic intelligence agent, helping you explore the hidden patterns and unconscious forces that may be affecting your life without your full knowledge.

If I "predict" anything, it's not so much the future as the unknown part of the present.

And if you ever want more than the 'scopes you're reading here, keep in mind that I also create EXPANDED AUDIO HOROSCOPES for you. They're four-to-five-minute meditations on the current state of your destiny.

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

Register and/or log in through the main page.

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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. Each forecast is 4-5 minutes long.

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"I always feel like I know myself better after listening to your audio 'scopes."
-June R., Austin, TX

"Your audio horoscopes calm me down when I'm too manic and pep me up when I'm down."
-Arthur T., Cleveland, OH

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TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

Poet James Merrill was ecstatic when he learned the Greek language. According to his biographer, he felt he could articulate his needs "with more force and clarity, with greater simplicity and less self-consciousness, than he ever could in his own language." He concluded, "Freedom to be oneself is all very well; the greater freedom is not to be oneself." Personally, I think that's an exaggeration. I believe the freedom to be yourself is very, very important. But for you in the coming weeks, Taurus, the freedom to not be yourself could indeed be quite liberating. What might you do to stretch your capacities beyond what you've assumed is true about you? Are you willing to rebel against and transcend your previous self-conceptions?

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

Musician Brian Eno made a deck of oracular cards called Oblique Strategies. Each card has a suggestion designed to trigger creative thinking about a project or process you're working on. You Geminis might find it useful to call on Oblique Strategies right now, since you're navigating your way through a phase of adjustment and rearrangement. The card I drew for you is "Honor thy error as hidden intention." Here's how I interpret it: An apparent lapse or misstep will actually be the result of your deeper mind guiding you to take a fruitful detour.

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

We devote a lot of energy to wishing and hoping about the meaningful joys we'd love to bring into our lives. And yet few of us have been trained in the best strategies for manifesting our wishes and hopes. That's the bad news. The good news is that now is a favorable time for you to upgrade your skills at getting what you want. With that in mind, I present you with the simple but potent wisdom of author Maya Angelou: "Ask for what you want and be prepared to get it." To flesh that out, I'll add: Formulate a precise statement describing your heart's yearning, and then work hard to make yourself ready for its fulfillment.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

What are the key parts of your life—the sources and influences that enable you to be your most soulful self? I urge you to nourish them intensely during the next three weeks. Next question: What are the marginally important parts of your life—the activities and proclivities that aren't essential for your long-term success and happiness? I urge you to corral all the energy you give to those marginally important things, and instead pour it into what's most important. Now is a crucial time in the evolution of your relationship with your primal fuels, your indispensable resources, your sustaining foundations.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

"When she spoke of beauty, he spoke of the fatty tissue supporting the epidermis," wrote short story author Robert Musil. He was describing a conversation between a man and woman who were on different wavelengths. "When she mentioned love," Musil continued, "he responded with the statistical curve that indicates the rise and fall in the annual birthrate." Many of you Virgos have the flexibility to express yourself well on both of those wavelengths. But in the coming months, I hope you'll emphasize the beauty and love wavelength rather than the fatty tissue and statistical curve wavelength. It'll be an excellent strategy for getting the healing you need.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

Libran blogger Ana-Sofia Cardelle was asked, "What is your signature perfume?" She said she hadn't found one. But then she described how she would like to smell: "somewhere between fresh and earthy: cinnamon and honey, a rose garden, saltwater baked in the sun." The coming days will be an excellent time to indulge in your own fantasies about the special fragrance you'd like to emanate. Moreover, I bet you'll be energized by pinpointing a host of qualities you would like to serve as cornerstones of your identity: traits that embody and express your uniqueness.

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HOMEWORK:

You don't have to believe in ideas that make you sad or tormented. Drop them.

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