

# Inquiring Minds: *A Change of Heart, Mind, and More since Oct. 17*

#65, May-June 2022 “What does not kill us, makes us stronger.” —but does it scare us? - [the quotable Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

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## KAISER AIDES HAD ME IN MORE STITCHES THAN THE SURGICAL PROCEDURE ITSELF

Three petite hospital aides, seemingly of Filipino decent, descended upon me as I lay on the gurney in the operation prep room. The woman in charge was friendly but not too familiar, asking me how to pronounce my last name instead of calling me “Mr. Joe” as Apple tech help often does. I wondered if she was trained to make small talk to relax her patients, but it seemed like a sincere effort get to know the person behind the hospital gown and maybe even prevent herself from being bored. I felt she really loved her job and brought her whole engaging personality to work. When she found out I was a retired school teacher, she started singing “Don’t know much about history, Don’t know much biology...” and the other two, almost on cue, joined in singing and adding a few dance moves as they started their exit. Before they got out of earshot, I asked if they knew who sang that song. They said they knew but couldn’t remember. I surprised all of us by blurting out “Sam Cooke sang that 50 years ago.” We all had a good laugh and bonded a bit. Mission accomplished on all fronts.

## SEMI-PRESENT AT MY OWN PACEMAKER IMPLANT BY CONSCIOUS SEDATION

As I was wheeled into the Operating Room my heart was still smiling from the happy memories of listening to Sam Cooke, “The King of Soul.” I was soon surrounded by a buzzing of activity as so many assistants swarmed around me as one said “like busy bees.” All were getting the room ready for the for the queen bee, the surgeon, to appear. One stood by my side, again checked my name and birthdate, and reassured me that she was going to infuse me with a relaxing solution. In the distance I could hear someone say that the defibrillator paddles were not in the room, and that she would borrow a set from another bay. When the cardiologist/surgeon (Doctor Alexander C Chen) entered, all was calm and ready. He promptly greeted me and re-established the bond he had with me at our pre-surgery consult several days before. (This

connection got stronger after I mentioned at the end of our session that my wife, Patricia, who was with me, once worked in this same hospital for 37 years as an RN. It worked, they were kindred spirits.) The room coordinator explained to him how the new lights could be adjusted. Then I could hear the doctor counting and confirming the number of instruments (8 stitching needles alone!) so nothing would be left inside me. All was well, more focused and calm.

READY TO START. The soothing, confident voice of Dr. Chen told me that the most painful part of this whole procedure would be the little stings of the local anesthetic shots. When he started to run the leads wires through my veins into my heart, he told me to *remain very still*. (Later those wires would be attached to the pacemaker, the little computer which would tell my slow heart to go faster when needed.) The pacemaker itself was installed a half inch or so under the skin on my left side just below my clavicle. Then I heard him say, “We have a slight bleeder here.” I felt him press on my chest, and heard a clicking of what I thought was a cauterizing instrument. I mentioned that I was still taking doctor recommended baby aspirin which was not recorded in my chart. “That’s OK,” he said, and I didn’t want to distract him anymore.

## THE CHALLENGE: RECOVERY, 4-6 WEEKS

The procedure itself took 60 minutes. but the real test for me would be to let it all heal and become a part of my body, a much longer process. It would be 4-6 weeks before I could get back on the tennis courts, swing a golf club, or ride my e-bike. For the next six weeks I was to wear a sling to remind me that I was not to raise my arm above my shoulder or lift anything more than 10 pounds, lest I rip out the lead wires which had to “knit” to my heart. If that happened, the operation itself would be a failure, and it would have to be done again on the other side, if that were even possible. As of this writing, I am half-way through my recovery from fixing a slow-paced heart. I have [a photo collage here of my first walk](#), and a link to my condition of [sinus bradycardia here](#). **Page 2 —>**

## GOOD NEWS WHICH HELPS ME CHANGE MY HEART AND HEAL IN MANY WAYS

Re-watching Little Lo perform [her hit song in Arnold a year ago](#) brings me great joy to watch the audience be moved and fill her tip basket. Apparently her song has been quite a hit because she has been invited to play it with a 56-piece orchestra at the [Bear Valley Music Festival](#) this summer, Sunday, July 31, in Family Fusion. We are also looking forward to her playing Annie in her first big role in a musical with [CStars](#), a summer youth theater program at Brett Harte HS Performing Arts Center in Angels Camp. We will enjoy visiting both children both here and in Murphys, now that they are out of school and off ski-team activities. OK, enough bragging about the kids, but those of you who have contact with pre-teens know how fun, and exhausting, they can be. Hope we won't be too boring when they hit their teens.



Since my recovery and my need to walk the nearby streets of our neighborhood, Lois turned me on to SPOTIFY, a Smart Phone app where you can listen to your favorite music, audio books, or podcasts, all free (with ads). My favorite history podcast to date is [The Civil War by Rich and Tracy](#), two history scholars of the Civil War who are so interesting, smart, and conversational. They have some 300+ podcasts on the Civil War since they started ten years ago, and have thousands of listeners. The Civil War has been called “the American Epic,” a heroic story filled with so much complexity, politics, and tragedy as to the futility and deadliness of war. On Spotify I have also listened to talks about Winston Churchill, and several tailored for the layperson on Albert Einstein. Best TED talks are also informative and/or inspirational. Also free classics on [Librivox](#).

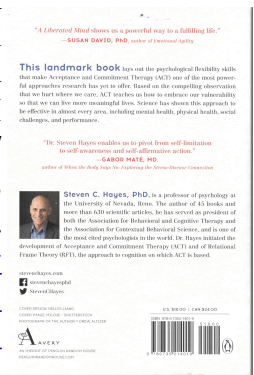


My brother Jeff and I are big believers in the county library system where we can save shekels and space by ordering delivery to our local library. Just ordered [Lincoln's Spies](#) recommended by John and Tracy above. Also, some of the books I like might not be your cup of tea.

I just came this [clever inspirational story](#) and [an outline of a little talk](#) I gave 10 years ago. Both a bit long but you might find some nuggets therein about seeking good.

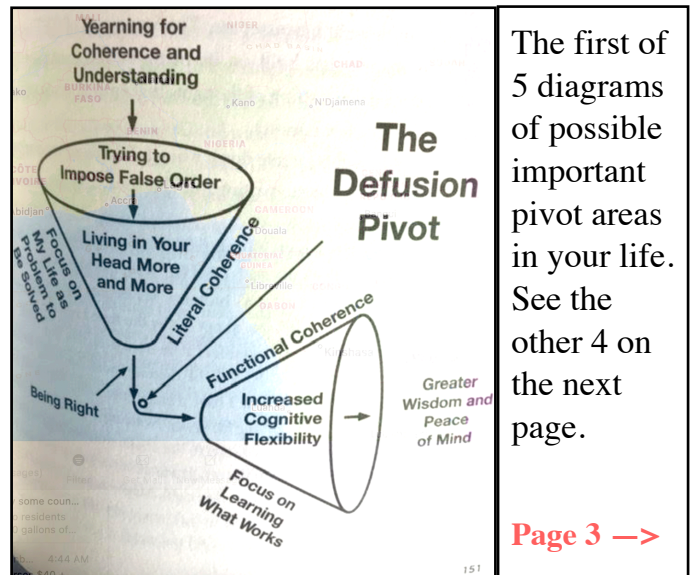
## AN INTERESTING AND HELPFUL BOOK

Below are the main points covered in the [A Liberated Mind: How to Move toward What really Matters](#). From the reviews and the TED talk linked below, this seemed like an interesting book to teach an old dog a few new tricks. ZOOM IN on the Cover to read more. And/or Click the link below to see his best 20 min. TED talk. [Psychological flexibility: How love turns pain into purpose | Steven Hayes | TEDxUniversityofNevada](#) Now that I'm almost done, I found parts were a bit too detailed, so I scanned the rest for salient insights.



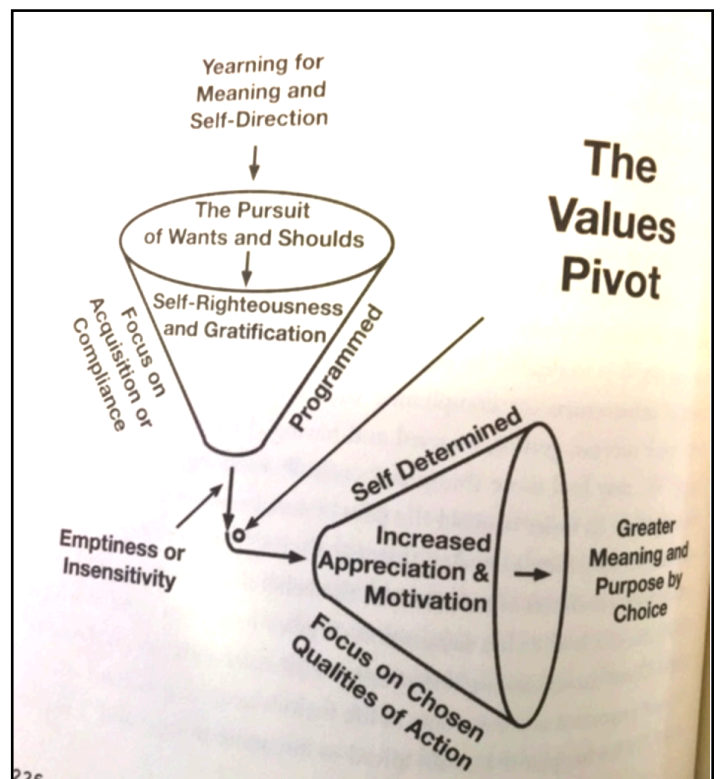
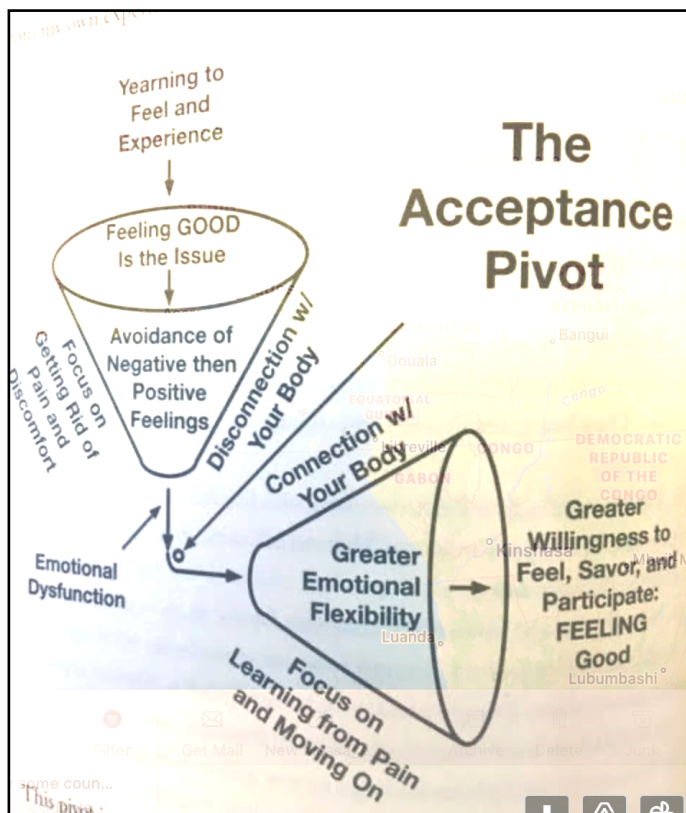
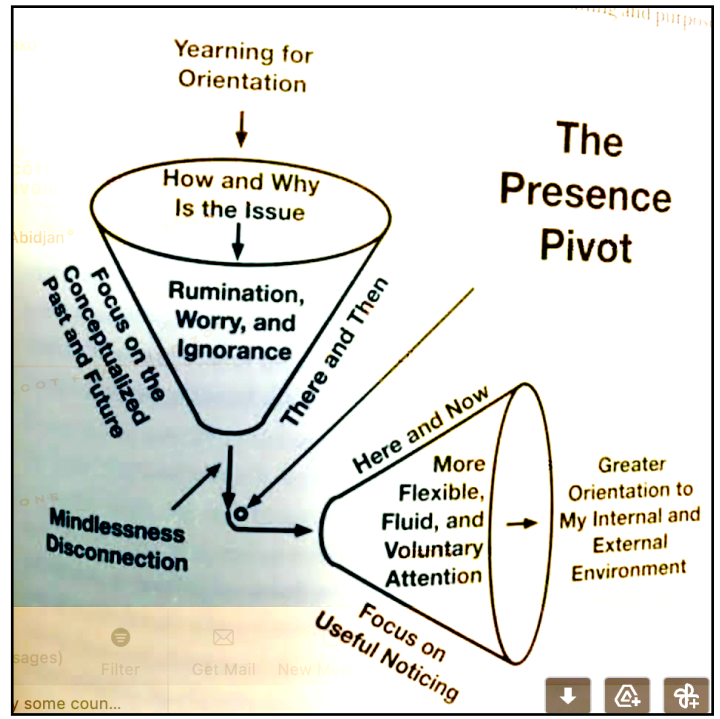
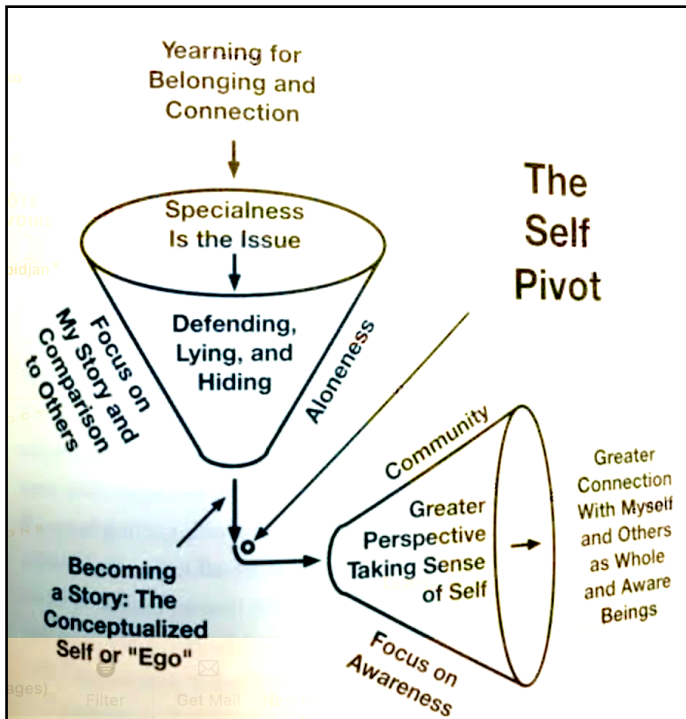
## SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN THE BOOK AND DIAGRAMS

- 1) Language can clutter our minds with too much info and/or stories we tell ourselves.
- 2) It's futile and harmful to try to obliterate our weaknesses.
- 3) It's more productive to pivot from them, that is use their energy to do something positive like aikido does or a spaceship uses gravity of a celestial body to slingshot it in an opposite direction.
- 4) The FIVE PIVOTS:
  - 1) Putting the Mind on a leash, such as to control the urge to impose a false order on that which we really do not know. (See diagram below which shows the problem and the pivot and diffusion of the problem.
  - 2) The Art of Perspective Taking—
  - 3) Learning from Pain
  - 4) Values—Learning by Choice
  - 5) Committing to Change
- 5) Using your ACT (Acceptance Commitment Therapy) to Evolve Your Life



The first of 5 diagrams of possible pivot areas in your life. See the other 4 on the next page.

4 of the remaining 5 possible areas where a pivot is needed or desired.



I hope you found something of interest in this issue of Inquiring Minds, and that we are using life's many challenges to help us all to grow in wisdom, strength, and compassion. Best, Joe B.