

10 MYTHS AND  
5 SECRETS TO  
REACHING  
HIGHER LEVELS OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

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10 Myths and 5 Secrets to Reaching Higher Levels of Consciousness  
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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Reaching Fundamental Wellbeing is a lot easier than most people believe!

The desire for inner peace is perhaps the most universal and timeless human pursuit. Since the dawn of recorded civilization, cultures and their philosophical, spiritual, and religious traditions have attempted to access and sustain levels of consciousness known as persistent “awakening”, “nonduality”, “enlightenment”, “the peace that passeth understanding”, and by hundreds of other terms. Here, we will collectively refer to these ways of experiencing the world as “Fundamental Wellbeing”.

In today’s increasingly chaotic world, the desire for inner peace has never been higher, or more important. Depression, anxiety, and fear are at all-time highs, and the media in all its various forms is not helping. You may be one of the literally billions of people seeking solutions to their nagging sense of fear, worry, restlessness, frustration, anxiety, agitation, and more — as well as the lingering discontentment that robs you of the joy of the present moment and lasting satisfaction from your achievements. This leads to mental and emotional triggers that literally drag you out of the present moment to either dwell on the pain of the past or worry about the future.

In recent years, many have turned to meditative practices, or even religious and spiritual leaders hoping to experience a shift to a higher level of wellbeing — hopeful that with hard work and dedication, they will experience this joyous state of inner peace that so many lineages and traditions have spoken of and promised.



Unfortunately, all too often, they are met by a different kind of frustration. Even after dedicated practice and loyalty to a technique, tradition, or teacher, most people experience little to no lasting relief. At best, they may have fleeting glimpses of inner peace, only to have it fade and be left wondering whether a persistent state of Fundamental Wellbeing is even possible for them.

Well, the good news is, after nearly twenty years of research and thousands of research participants, our rigorous scientific study has found that, yes, lasting inner peace is possible for you, no matter how many other things or how hard you have tried up until now.

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## MY PERSONAL STORY



Hi, my name is Jeffery Martin. I'm a researcher, cognitive neuroscientist, and author of the authoritative book on these types of people, *The Finders*. This book isn't about me, but I think it can help to know a bit about my background and how I came to write it. After a lengthy career in the broadcasting, technology, and business worlds, I found myself successful but unfulfilled. No matter how much I achieved, a nagging feeling that it wasn't enough colored my moment-to-moment experience of life—you know the one.

In my case, I questioned how I was living my life, and eventually, I decided that I needed to make major life changes because I simply wanted to be as happy as possible. I set out to find the world's happiest people and study them. And that turned out to be the best decision of my entire life.

I went back to school and studied psychology and neuroscience at Harvard and transformative studies at CIIS and began to track down the populations of the happiest people out there. Eventually, this led me to spiritual and religious people who were making claims about being enlightened, nondual, persistently mystical, experiencing the peace that passeth understanding, and so on.

Frankly, these people's claims seemed extraordinary but definitely worth investigating. When I began, I wasn't sure what to expect. I actually thought I might uncover that, at best, they were self-deceptive and, at worst, maybe charlatans or even psychopathological.

The research began by investigating some of the most respected spiritual teachers and leaders across religious faiths and traditions. That period was incredibly fruitful, but soon, we realized that they were just the tip of the iceberg. Although religion and spirituality have been a carrier of knowledge about these ways of experiencing the world across time and even the rise and fall of empires, the most interesting information wasn't found in this population, and that was very good news.

I had absolutely no interest in becoming a spiritual renunciant or monk or anything similar. You probably don't either. I just wanted to know how to live the happiest and most fulfilled life possible while also living a "normal life." Fortunately, over the years, we found countless people doing just that and who were willing to join the study and participate in the research.



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## THE RESEARCH

This book is based on findings from the largest and longest cross-cultural, peer-reviewed, scientific inquiry into Fundamental Wellbeing. It began around 2006, has spanned six continents, and involved thousands of research participants. There's truly been nothing else like it. It's an all-out effort to understand what changes in people initially and over time when they have a persistent shift into Fundamental Wellbeing, as well as how they got there in the first place.

The research has led to a lot of widely acknowledged firsts, including the only cross-cultural, pan-tradition map of the types and depths of Fundamental Wellbeing. It's also led to the highly safe, rapid, and reliable protocols to help people get there. The keys we learned about how to do that are covered in a later section.

The research is based in psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. In the early years, it generally involved traveling to research participants in person, doing a six-to-twelve-hour interview with them, giving them a wide range of gold-standard psychology measures, and even sometimes measuring their physiology (i.e., brainwaves, heart rate, and so on), all to decode and understand these extraordinary experiences of living they were telling us about.



Ultimately, these efforts allowed us to strip away the cultural, religious, and spiritual beliefs about these ways of experiencing life and reach the core of them. The wonderful thing about that core is that it is relevant for anyone anywhere in history, including those of us living a modern Western lifestyle. It does not care about context.

We also catalogued how people made the transition, which often followed a path from temporary peak experiences to then becoming seekers trying to make them stick, and finally to persistent Finders.

Eventually, we were able to distill all of this down to a cocktail of methods that were the most reliable for producing Fundamental Wellbeing, so that we could measure who someone was before they transitioned, what happened to them as they were transitioning, who they became as a Finder, and where their life unfolded from there.

Perhaps even more remarkably, we learned that if someone could find which of these methods was best aligned with them at any given time, their transition could happen in a very short period of time — a period from just a few moments to a week or two.

We put this to the test. We found six research participants of different genders, ages, backgrounds, and so on from the US, Europe, and South Africa and systematically put them through the protocol of methods we created. What happened shocked even me.

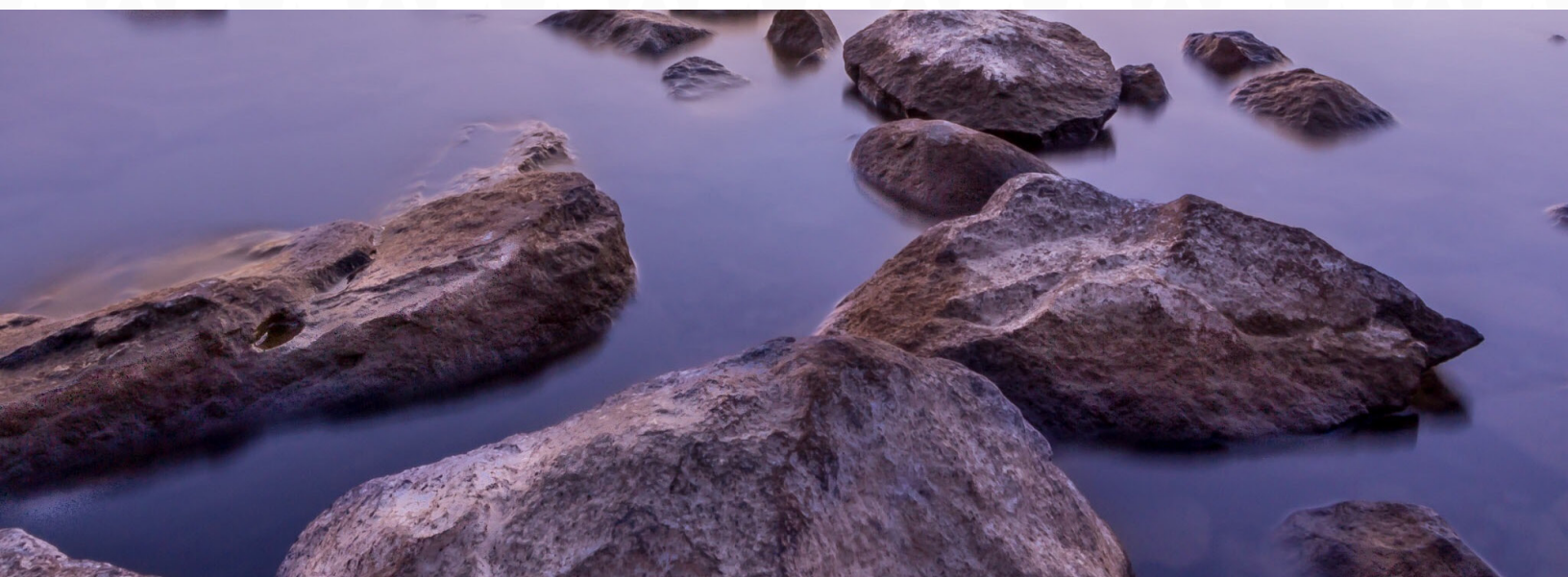
Of the six participants, five finished the program and transitioned to an ongoing state of Fundamental Wellbeing. As of right now, eight or so years later, we know that at least four of them that have stayed in touch with us remain in Fundamental Wellbeing.

Initially, we thought this was a fluke. So we tried it again with a different and larger cohort using the videos recorded during the first live training for the pilot group. This time, 73% of participants reported transitioning. We've now run these experiments with thousands of people across dozens of cohorts with the same highly remarkable levels of success that have completely surpassed all other approaches. More recently, we even managed to create a new version of this protocol that shortened the process from the original four-month protocol to just six weeks of one-and-a-half-hour-per-day at-home practice.

For years, I was an acknowledged expert on these forms of experience, and people would ask me for help in reaching them. But I frankly had no idea what to tell them. The discovery of these protocols has been a phenomenal blessing. Many people who have used them had peak experiences they were looking to have become persistent, and they've been able to do just that. Other people, who had never had even a glimpse of Fundamental Wellbeing, and many times had never even heard of this type of thing but just were referred by friends or something, have consistently been able to not only experience this, but also lock in a path forward in persistence.

Now, if you're like many people we've helped over the years, this may sound impossible to believe. How could it be the case that something that has seemed so elusive throughout human history has now been made so accessible? What our research has consistently shown is that reaching Fundamental Wellbeing is not that difficult as long as you take the right approach. This is just one of the many false beliefs about it that we've uncovered and proven to be wrong over the years. There's so much misinformation about these ways of experiencing life.

There are many myths and inaccuracies about Fundamental Wellbeing that our research has uncovered. In the upcoming pages, I'll provide you with the top 10 that I believe are most responsible for preventing people from reaching Fundamental Wellbeing. In the section after these, I'll give you the most important aspects of the formula we've used to make this all happen. The crown jewels from our nearly twenty-year global scientific research project, so you can get there too.



I am so excited and grateful to bring this to you. It is the culmination of many people's efforts all around the world who have worked for or collaborated with this project—all in service to what is truly possible for humanity. For you.

I want to congratulate you on being interested in this. I hope you realize how rare you are. Right now, very few people even know about Fundamental Wellbeing. Even fewer are actively working to achieve it. I hope you know how much we all admire your commitment and courage in taking this important step, not only for you but also for all of us. Let's get started!

PART 1:  
THE 10 MYTHS  
ABOUT  
REACHING  
FUNDAMENTAL  
WELLBEING

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE MYTHS

In this section, we share the 10 most damaging myths that are pervasive in the field of so-called consciousness and spiritual development. The myths that are sabotaging your chances of experiencing a high-functioning and persistent experience of Fundamental Wellbeing. You're going to learn the truth about accessing heightened states of consciousness, discarding the dogma, and understanding exactly how you can achieve an extraordinary level of wellbeing as your moment-to-moment baseline in life.

You'll learn why you haven't been able to experience lasting inner peace and discover how you can solve this problem right away. This is a bold claim and probably very contrary to what you've heard before. But, as you'll see, these claims are not my opinion. They are derived from our years of scientific experimentation with a wide range of meditation, positive psychology, and cognitive science practices — all of which comprise the world's largest research effort into understanding how to safely, rapidly, and reliably reach Fundamental Wellbeing and far more importantly, optimally integrate it into your life.





## MYTH #1: THERE ARE VERY FEW PEOPLE IN FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

The first myth for us to tackle is the popular view that there are very few people in Fundamental Wellbeing. Some even believe that it might even be something that only happens to someone once in a thousand years. This belief is so pervasive that when we started our research project, many people openly wondered if we could even find a handful of subjects.

It wasn't easy. We had to invest an enormous amount of resources in finding our first 1,000 or so research subjects. Along the way, we learned something fascinating. There are probably millions of people around the world who experience Fundamental Wellbeing, if not tens of millions.

They're all over the place, with many hiding in plain sight and choosing not to let others know. That's because they often aren't around anyone else who experiences Fundamental Wellbeing, and they learn very quickly that when they start to talk about how they experience the world, other people have difficulty understanding it. So, they just shut up and live their lives.

As our project became well known around the world, more and more of them contacted us to volunteer for our initial study. Soon we had more than we needed or could even handle. They've continued to just keep arriving in our inbox day in and day out.

It turns out that there is absolutely no shortage of people who experience Fundamental Wellbeing. Our data shows there has been an increase in people transitioning since around 1996. We attribute this to the moment that the internet matured to the point of facilitating an entirely new level of global information sharing, which included information about Fundamental Wellbeing.

We estimate that about half of a percent (0.5%) of the population experience it, but that could be a significant underestimate, as I'll discuss in the second myth...

## MYTH #2: WHEN YOU'RE IN FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING, YOU KNOW IT

(Hint, there's a very good chance you may be in Fundamental Wellbeing right now and not realize it...)

Something extraordinary happened in 2020. As COVID hit around the world, we were doing direct laboratory-based noninvasive brain stimulation research. Essentially working on a push-button solution to help people reach Fundamental Wellbeing. Suddenly, we found ourselves sitting at home like everyone else.

For the previous seven years, we'd been conducting research with a four-month protocol that transitioned about 70% of people who used it to Fundamental Wellbeing. We'd used that on well over a thousand people to track what changed as they transitioned. However, that protocol had a secret. We knew that 60% of people transitioned from a smaller subset of that protocol, and for years we'd wanted to test that in its own right. Suddenly, we had nothing but time, so we set up our first experiment to do just that.

Over 1,500 people initially used that new, shortened protocol with a high level of success. We're used to our protocols safely, reliably, and rapidly transitioning people, so it was nice to have a shorter six week protocol we could use. But, something much more amazing came from it that was unexpected.

This new version of the experiment was much more accessible than our previous one. It took a lot less time, and people were sitting at home with only time on their hands. As many people used it in one year as used our longer and more intensive protocol in seven!



Our longer protocol took a lot of time and dedication, so the people who took that program were generally the most die-hard of seekers. These were people who had often tried many things without success and who had been trying to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing for a long time. The new shorter protocol was much easier to do, so a wider demographic of people tried it, often just for the heck of it to see if it would do anything.


When we measured the people who came into these experiments, nearly HALF of them were ALREADY in Fundamental Wellbeing — they just didn't know it! The education we provided as part of the protocol made them realize it. Most were absolutely stunned!

Many of these individuals had been longtime seekers. They had practiced many techniques, often off and on for years. And, apparently, at some point, they had transitioned but not noticed.

You might be asking yourself how is that possible? For us, it's a well-known phenomenon. We'd had many research subjects over the years tell us that it took them a while before they realized that they'd transitioned, and we'd seen it in our own experiments. There were many times where our data very clearly told us that someone had transitioned, and even other Finders around the person had noticed it, but the person him or herself did not.

Most people are looking for some sort of powerful or overwhelming transition to Fundamental Wellbeing. Some kind of night-and-day experience. The reason for this is that it's what is often written and spoken about by spiritual teachers. However, our data showed us early on that these types of experiences were a small minority. Here's the hitch, though. The people who have them are more likely to shift their lives and become teachers, authors, and so on. So the marketplace of ideas is biased towards their type of transition experience, even though it is actually quite rare.





Those who are trying to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing using things like meditation or prayer have quite gentle transitions. So gentle that they can be missed. What often happens is that these practices raise their wellbeing over time, prior to their transition. By the time the transition comes, there isn't enough of a shift for them to notice. Conversely, those who are most likely to notice are often severely depressed just prior to their transition.

Even world-renowned experts related this from their own experiences. One long-time practitioner and teacher, someone responsible for the transition of over a thousand other people, told us he didn't notice his own transition at first. One day a couple of weeks after it, he was standing in the street talking to someone else about what to be on the lookout for regarding Fundamental Wellbeing. As he described each item, he realized that he was actually experiencing it! That's how this highly recognized and experienced expert with decades of background in this came to realize his own transition.

Another thing that happens involves people from a specific tradition that gives them a set of markers to look for in their own experience. Sometimes, those markers are based on just one person's experience who founded the sect they are a part of. In those circumstances, few, if any, others ever reach the "same level" of Fundamental Wellbeing that the original person did. In other words, they don't have the exact same experience.

Of course, that's what one would expect. Everyone has a different nervous system. The odds of having the exact same experience in the exact same way as another person is highly unlikely.

Historically this situation produced a wide range of sects within religious and spiritual traditions that focus on Fundamental Wellbeing, with corresponding disputes about what is "right" that carry down to this day.

These types of traditions bring other problems. For example, most academic scholars acknowledge that it is virtually impossible to know what someone was referring to in their lived experience hundreds or thousands of years ago. The languages are mostly dead or substantially changed, the contextual meaning from the culture of their day largely inaccessible, and so on.

Scholars often demonstrate that we tend to misinterpret American texts written in English from just one hundred or so years ago. Those are written in our language, but from an older part of our own culture (if you're from the US), and yet we can barely grasp their meaning. The culture they were written in is, in reality, long gone and unless someone pursues a PhD to try to go back and gain an understanding of it, it's nearly hopeless.

So it's not surprising that this is even more the case from religious and spiritual texts talking about the phenomenology of Fundamental Wellbeing, and what someone should be on the lookout for. Nonetheless, what often happens is that someone falls into this or that sect or school of ideas and their dogma and spends their time simply looking in the wrong direction. When this happens, they often fail to realize when they have actually transitioned.

We've seen this enough over the years to realize that it is a reasonably common occurrence, but what we didn't realize until 2020 were the wider implications. We're now wondering just how many people in the so-called "seeker" community are actually Finders and don't know it. And we suspect it is a lot more people than has been previously imagined.

We've started a new research project to try to find out. If you'd like to participate, you can begin by filling out a survey at the following link. You can participate anonymously or provide your name and email and we'll send you our best guess of where you're at, along with customized tips for you (as a thank-you for participating in the research project):

<https://haai.nonsymbolic.org/sf/c9cc54c3>



## MYTH #3: FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING IS RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL

We owe our base knowledge about Fundamental Wellbeing primarily to religions and spiritual systems that took an interest in it. As empires rose and fell, these groups lasted through the ages — and along with them, their knowledge of Fundamental Wellbeing.

Fundamental Wellbeing is one of the few things about human psychology that hasn't been comprehensively explored by science. The famous psychologist Abraham Maslow was hard at work on it when he passed away in June 1970. In fact, he'd established yet another new branch of psychology, transpersonal psychology, to specifically study it just before his death. Unfortunately, the rigorous study of it died with him, and wasn't resumed until the last twenty years or so.

Before things are explored by science, they are largely in the realm of magic and myth. Few of us today would ask for an exorcism when we are sick with a bacterial infection. We simply reach for our antibiotics. Likewise, it's not likely that you'll go get leeches or take a knife and cut into yourself when you have a fever. Though bleeding people with a fever was once common practice, modern science has given us ways of handling fevers that are actually effective.

Until very recently, this type of scientific update had not been done with Fundamental Wellbeing. It had been left to the realm of the magical and mystical. The very myths covered in this text are a testament to this. Fundamental Wellbeing is nearly impossible to reach, they tell us. Yet as you saw in a previous myth, it isn't. Our scientifically derived research protocols routinely transition most people who use them. And on and on it goes.

We've spent nearly twenty years researching this from the ground up with the tools of modern science, literally having one myth being dispelled after another as we went. Often, we didn't even know we were doing that. We'd learn after the fact that this or that aspect of our research was seen as revolutionary by one or more religious or spiritual groups.

The reality is that we didn't actually need science to tell us that Fundamental Wellbeing is perfectly happy existing in secular form. Over the years, our project attracted many atheists and agnostics who had transitioned to it. Their data was fundamentally the same as our religious and spiritual subjects. Once under the hood with modern scientific tools and methods, it didn't seem to matter whether someone was religious, spiritual, agnostic or atheist.

This is what allowed us to create the first truly cross-cultural, pan-tradition map of the psychological territory of Fundamental Wellbeing, as you'll hear about in a later section. It's also given us a set of modern methods that allow a majority of people to transition in short periods of time, instead of years, decades, or not at all. And it's taught us that a whole lot of the dogma that Fundamental Wellbeing has been wrapped in over the years simply does not matter at all, as we'll see in the next myth...





## **MYTH #4: ACHIEVING FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING REQUIRES YOU TO GIVE UP NORMAL LIFE, AND MAYBE EVEN GO TO THE EXTREME OF LIVING LIKE A MONK**

Every day, all around the world, ordinary people are transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. There are literally thousands of them who have interfaced with our research project over the years. Despite this it's still common for many traditions and teachers to insist the opposite is the case. They seem caught in the archaic dogma that the only way to achieve inner peace is to forego some, or even all, of the comforts of the modern world - even meaningful relationships.

As you might imagine, giving up everything you hold dear and spending years on a park bench blissing out is a lot to sacrifice, even for lasting inner peace. And there has been no indication in our research this matters. People seem as likely to reach Fundamental Wellbeing by going that route as staying in the routine of their current life.

You may have also heard advice about avoiding things like eating meat, having sex, accumulating wealth, and so on as being important keys to transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. We found absolutely no evidence for things like this being beneficial. Our research found that there were people all around the world, of all ages and walks of life, with all kinds of different families and jobs, who experienced Fundamental Wellbeing. It could have been true at one time, but the research clearly shows that the notion that you have to sacrifice all of the progress of modern society to reach or sustain Fundamental Wellbeing is obsolete, if it was ever true at all.



Today, instead of helping more people wake up this type of dogma is actually doing the exact opposite. It's a huge turnoff. The average person is not going to adopt a sexless, broke, vegan lifestyle in hopes of transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. It just increases the amount of resistance people feel towards reaching Fundamental Wellbeing for no good reason. Don't let that happen to you. Oh, and here's a little hint: it doesn't even matter how you sit when you meditate. In fact, feel free to lie down. We've had plenty of our research subjects transition while flat on their back!

Believing that you have to give things like this up in order to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing is one barrier people have to transitioning. Another is a belief it will somehow mess up their life. This is often perpetuated by stories like people just sitting on a bench for years after their transition. As we'll see in the next section, this is also (largely) a myth...



## MYTH #5: FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING WILL MESS UP YOUR LIFE

Even the most ardent and sincere spiritual seekers are often terrified of transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. Typically, this is because of the stories some Finders have told, like having to sit on a park bench for a couple of years after transitioning, being unable to hold a job, or wanting to isolate from everyone and everything (including their family), and so on.

The reality is that these are very rare exceptions to what's normal. The vast majority of people transition from seeking to finding and simply go on about their life with a newly enhanced sense of extraordinary wellbeing.

Nonetheless, these beliefs are so pervasive and have taken root at such a deep level of belief that many seekers aren't even aware of how much this is creating resistance to their transition. Even despite our enormous pool of research data, it took us a while to uncover and see it. Far too many seekers are afraid that a transition will mean problems for their career, family obligations, and so on — and there's a good reason for that that we touched on back in Myth 2.

Although most transitions to Fundamental Wellbeing are gentle, a tiny minority are extreme. These are so rare that as I write this, out of the thousands of people who have used our research protocol to transition, I can't think of a single case it has happened to.



However, people with these more extreme transition experiences are much more likely than other Finders to write about them, change their lives, and become spiritual teachers. This leaves the seekers who consume all of their videos, books, workshops, and so on with the impression that it's normal. They believe these exceptional experiences are what happens when someone transitions to Fundamental Wellbeing, when in fact they are almost never what happens. I'd even go as far as to say that these are a pathological and undesirable forms of transition because of the toll they take not only in the people's lives but on their psychology and experience of the world until a deeper integration of the experience can happen.

We know from our research that this concern about what might happen post-transition has become one of the top reasons that more people don't shift into Fundamental Wellbeing. Once we spotted it and were able to help our research participants identify and realize it wasn't something to be concerned about, they experienced far more ease and flow, and infinitely less resistance to transitioning to types of Fundamental Wellbeing that were consistent with the rest of their lifestyle and goals.

Although it's unlikely you'll leave your job and family and go sit on a park bench for a couple of years, the last statement in the previous paragraph is definitely important. You need to be thoughtful about what is and isn't appropriate for your life, and that includes in the area of Fundamental Wellbeing. That's one of the key things that our research provides you with. There's no reason to accept centuries-old notions of what Fundamental Wellbeing should be like.



Remember, people from all walks of life transition all the time. A better question to ask yourself is not only how to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing, but also how to do it in a way that is best in line with living an amazing modern lifestyle. This may be the greatest gift of our research. It has allowed us to reach deeply into the lives of Finders all over the world and realize the core and most important aspects of Fundamental Wellbeing while leaving the millennia of accumulated dogma about it behind.

This allows us to enter Fundamental Wellbeing in the modern era in a way never before possible, one that is matched to today's lifestyle. The reality is that Fundamental Wellbeing allows you to flourish in your life in ways that are, literally, unimaginable. The more you can free it from notions tied to past eras and outdated or no longer relevant ideas, the more this becomes possible.

Transitioning is just the beginning. It leads to an entirely new developmental trajectory, one that is only now beginning to get mapped out. We've done a tremendous amount of work on this and have a free mini-course that shares our most important research findings. It ensures that Finders have the basics they need regarding how to optimally live with and integrate Fundamental Wellbeing in the modern era. If you're reading this and you're a Finder, not a seeker, you can find that at: <http://ExplorersCourse.com>





## MYTH #6: TRANSITIONING TO FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING TAKES A LONG TIME AND INVOLVES TORTUROUS PRACTICES

If you've been interested in Fundamental Wellbeing for any length of time, you've no doubt noticed that most seekers don't expect to reach Fundamental Wellbeing any time soon. It's often spoken about in terms of years, decades, and even lifetimes!

Regardless of what you've heard or may believe about this, you can experience a shift to persistent inner peace moments from now if you have the right technique. We have participants who have done just that. About 1% of the people who use one of our research-derived protocols transition on the first day, with the first method they try. When this started happening, we couldn't believe it. However, now many years later, we expect about one out of every one hundred people will have this happen. And about 3% to transition within the first few days.

If that sounds impossible to you, or you think you could never have that kind of luck, I have even better news. All of our research has taught us that when you find the method that works for you, it shouldn't take you longer than a week or two of using it to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing. A WEEK! That's literally all it takes. Not lifetimes, not decades, not years, not even months.

There have been areas in the world where this was well known and the local practices were in sync with the population. Let me give you an example. While conducting research at a famous Buddhist monastery in Burma, one of our researchers happened upon some very old nuns. They told her that when they were young, people would come to the monastery and transition in about a week.

If they headed into their second week without a transition, they received special attention. And if they were there after four weeks, the nuns assumed they were hiding out from the authorities and called the army to come and get them! Their methods were literally so reliable that it was inconceivable someone could spend a month doing them and not transition.

Fast-forward to today, and the success rate of that monastery is very low. People stay for months and don't transition. So what happened? According to the nuns, the effectiveness seemed to go down with each new form of mass media introduced. Movies, then radio, then television, then the internet all came and with each there was a drop in the effectiveness of their methods. The nuns assume that it has to do with how these all changed the people who consumed them, and I tend to agree with them.

When the nuns first showed up, they had a method that had worked for generations on a population that was largely homogeneous and unchanging. Simply put, the method matched the people who were using it. Over time, as the people changed, the methods didn't, and they became less and less effective.

Our data clearly shows that it's a matching game. You simply need to find the method that is matched to you and use it. If you do that for at least one hour per day, for a week or so, the odds are greatly in your favor that you'll transition.

People wonder all the time what the "secret" is that has made our protocols so effective at transitioning people. How is it that so many of our participants, who were ardent spiritual practitioners for years, have experienced more results in a few days or weeks with our protocol than years or decades of other approaches? This is it. This is all there is to it.



We've managed to research our way to the best methods available, look at them in the light of modern science, and make key tweaks to them to make them more effective for the modern brain, and put them into very precisely sequenced “cocktails” that help people to systematically try them out in optimum ways.

For some people, about 3%, the first method works for them, and they transition in the first few days. Others will do it in the next few days, others a week later, and so on. As new methods are systematically introduced, people match up to them. As they do, they transition. It is that simple — we literally have years of peer-reviewed data with thousands of people that proves it.

It's a simple formula that you can use to do the same. You have only to give a method a week, and if it doesn't look like you're making progress, chuck it and try a different one. Following this pattern will lead to much more success in reaching Fundamental Wellbeing than you've probably even imagined is possible up to this point in your life. That takes us to our next myth...what exactly are you looking for anyway?



## MYTH #7: PEAK AND MYSTICAL-TYPE EXPERIENCES POINT THE WAY TO FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

Have you experienced a peak state? Is part of your quest to reach Fundamental Wellbeing about getting back to the way it made you feel?

There are many ways that these incredible moments can appear in people's lives. The famous psychologist Dr. Abraham Maslow described them as "the moments of the highest happiness and fulfillment" and noted that they seem able to happen to anyone at any time, even during the most mundane moments of life.

Often these experiences produce a sense of deep fulfillment, stillness, significance, unification, and even joy in your moment-to-moment experience. It can seem like time slows way down and your mind becomes focused yet peaceful. Your inner critic shuts off, and you become intensely present and deeply aware. You might even experience a feeling of oneness with the universe itself.

If you've experienced them, you know these moments can be among the most significant in your life, if not the most significant. Unfortunately for most people, these experiences fade, making them a double-edged sword. On the one hand, these moments hint at an entirely different way that life can be experienced. One well beyond the ordinary and that is highly desirable. Just a moment of this type of experience often changes someone forever in remarkably positive ways.

One great thing about having such an experience is that you can be certain that your brain is wired for it. There's no need to wonder if it's possible for you. It has happened. But ironically, on the other hand, these experiences often become a source of frustration. It can almost feel like the universe is teasing you, showing you how amazing life can be, but then keeping it just out of reach from your moment-to-moment experience. Although there are a wide variety of these experiences and they're very common, few people know it because of how difficult they are to talk about without sounding a little bit weird. And frankly, that's when you can even find the words for them at all.

People who've had one or more of these experiences often yearn for them to return, and they spend considerable time and effort trying to make that happen. For the most hardcore, this can involve years of dedicated spiritual practice, expensive inconvenient retreats, and even faithful patronage to teachers and gurus. Unfortunately, the most common outcome of all of that is typically just more temporary peak experiences.

The main issue is that you're looking for exactly what you experienced during your peak experience, or at least something close and in that direction. There are many, many different types of peak experience. Some are subtle but nonetheless life-changing and powerful. Often, these types involve a deep and profound present-moment experience and a sense of having amazing truths about life, the universe, and so on revealed. Other forms of peak experience are overwhelming. These typically involve high amounts of energy and arousal in your nervous system. And, frankly, it's impossible to imagine living from moment to moment in that kind of state.

Many people who have one of the latter assume that it's the ultimate experience, and it is what they should be trying to get back to. However, that's not an accurate way of thinking about this. Let me help you to reframe it in a more helpful way. One of our research alumni put it best, I think, when after having one of these very overwhelming temporary experiences, he said, "I was like, damn! That would be really useful to have at about 30% the intensity, 100% of the time."

The famous psychologist Dr. Abraham Maslow, who I mentioned previously, was the world's leading expert on peak experiences. They comprised a significant part of his life's work. Towards the end of his life, he had a shift to persistence himself. Here's what he had to say about it:

*“As these peak experiences died down in me, something else happened, which is a very precious thing. A sort of precipitation occurred of what might be called the sedimentation or the fallout from illuminations, insights and other life experiences that were very important. The result has been a kind of unitive consciousness. I can define this unitive consciousness very simply for me as having a simultaneous perception of the sacred and the ordinary, or the miraculous and the ordinary, or the miraculous and the rather constant or easy, without effort, sort of thing. There's a paradox because it's miraculous and yet it doesn't produce an autonomic burst. These elements are present, but are constant rather than climactic. It's possible to sit and look at something miraculous for an hour and enjoy every second of it. There tends to be more serenity rather than emotionality. There's a sense of certainty. It feels very, very good to be able to see the world as miraculous and not merely in the concrete, not reduced only to the behavioral, not limited only to the here and now. These experiences are described quite well in many literatures. This is not the standard description of the acute mystical experience, but the way in which the world looks if the mystical experience really takes hold. You go about your business as the great mystics did. You can run a grocery store and pay the bills, but still carry on the sense of witnessing the world in the way you did in the great moments of mystic perception.”*

- Krippner, S. (1972). The plateau experience: A.H. Maslow and others. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 4(2), page 113.



This puts the difference between peak and persistent experiences very clearly. When Dr. Maslow says autonomic burst, he's talking about high arousal or high amounts of energy in your system versus a more peaceful state that exists with the persistent, ongoing form of Fundamental Wellbeing.

We've also seen significant differences in the brainwaves of peak versus persistent forms of this experience. There are some very important aspects that can be in opposite directions while others are aligned or even similar. So you can see a relationship between these two types of experience, and yet that they're clearly different things.

The reality is that although temporary peak experiences point to what's possible, they are typically not the best guide to use when attempting to home in on a persistent experience of this in your life. The persistent version is even more incredible and, importantly, more functional.

So it's important to have the right target in mind. There's often a glimpse of what the more persistent form of the experience is like while someone is on the downslope from a powerful mystical experience. However, their eyes are still fixed on the pinnacle of the experience, assuming that's the target.

As a result, they miss what's possible. It's like gold slipping through their fingers. If these experiences happen for you, that moment is worth looking for as you're on your way back down to Earth, so to speak. All of this relates to our next myth, the one true path to Fundamental Wellbeing...





## MYTH #8: THERE'S ONLY ONE TRUE PATH TO FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

The myth that there is only one true path to Fundamental Wellbeing is a highly limiting belief that is perhaps the single biggest cause of frustration and failure for people seeking Fundamental Wellbeing. As we've seen, access to and knowledge of these practices has traditionally been held in the realm of religion and spirituality and, over the years, a tremendous amount of dogma has been introduced into something that's actually simple.

One thing this led to was a restriction of what people practiced and used. Ultimately, this means that Christians only did practices from within the Christian tradition, Sufis from within the Sufi tradition, Buddhists from within the Buddhist tradition, and so on.

With methods psychological fit matters. Today, people have access to methods from many traditions. Our research data shows that Finders often used more than one of the top methods we uncovered, sometimes for decades, yet only one ultimately worked for them. When it did, it often worked quickly. Why? Because it's not enough to just find a good method. You also must find the right method for where you're at right now.

As I mentioned in a previous section, that's the entire premise of our research protocols. Our research suggests that even the best methods only work for a small percentage of the population at any given time. Imagine if you were locked into a tradition that had only one or two primary methods. Even if, by some stroke of luck, these were the top two most effective methods on the entire planet, it's unlikely that they would work for more than a small percentage of those who used them.



People who spend a long time practicing a system commonly see some people who transition right away, some a while later, others still later, and so on. What's happening here? It's simple. As people change over the years and decades, more have the possibility of their psychology coming into alignment with the method, and transitioning. Despite this, the reality is that most probably never will. If the latter had just looked a little further afield and tried more methods, they most likely would have transitioned as well. That's the path that you want to make sure you take. It's the path of success.

People often wonder how people can get stuck in a system for decades, even when it seems like little progress is being made. For some, it's about belief. They are told the system is the only one that works, or something similar, and they believe that and keep at it. Those folks are in the minority though.

Most people get locked into a system because they originally benefit from it. It produces some forward movement for a while, and then stops. Because it once seemed to work, people then buy into the dogma and keep at it. Ironically, that's the worst thing they could do.

Here's the reality. If you are practicing a method for a solid hour each day and it stops working, you should keep at it for a couple more weeks and see if it kicks back in. If it does, great! Stick with that method for as long as it works.

If it doesn't, then it's best to assume that the method has done what it's going to do for you and move on. Many people have difficulty doing this because they've often tried other methods before this one, none of which seemed to do much for them. It may have taken them a long time to find something that worked, and they don't want to give it up.

A method stops working because it changes you. As a result, it is no longer in phase with you and the progress you need to make. The method has done its part. You're a different "you" now, and it only worked for the old you. So you must let go of it and find the next method that will work.

If you don't, the now-ineffective method will often pull you backwards, undoing the progress it made for you. You don't want that. So just drop it, don't look back, and move on to the next method.

While we're talking about this, let me give you another tip. No method should ever be considered permanently unusable. Let's say that you tried ten methods before you found one that worked. Now, that method has changed you and is no longer effective.

At this point, it is fine to go back and try those other ten methods because you are a different you. You don't want to rule them out because they didn't work. They didn't work for the old you, not the new you. If you rule them out permanently and one of them is the method you need next, you could significantly delay your progress.

So, now you know that there isn't just one path to Fundamental Wellbeing, but what about one correct type or form of it? Let's explore that in our next myth...



## MYTH #9: THERE IS ONLY ONE TYPE, OR ONE CORRECT TYPE, OF FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

It's not uncommon to hear people in religious or spiritual traditions advocating their perspective as the “only” or “only correct” type of Fundamental Wellbeing. Our research uncovered many different types of Fundamental Wellbeing that people experience, though most will experience one or more of four primary types. When settled into, they all have the characteristic of being deeply peaceful, present, and lacking that nagging sense of discontentment that plagues the rest of the population.

We've written and spoken extensively about these different types, so we're not going to cover them more here. Our landmark book, *The Finders*, is widely available and offers the most comprehensive coverage of this topic that is available. You can also learn more about the different types, in depth, from this peer-reviewed scientific paper about them, as well as in this extensive keynote on the topic from a scientific conference.

An important thing to keep in mind is that the type of Fundamental Wellbeing that is best for you typically relates most strongly to your current stage of life and various commitments. Although any form of Fundamental Wellbeing is a great place to experience life from, some are most likely more optimal for your life than others.

As I mentioned in a previous myth, you can be deeply in Fundamental wellbeing and conventionally thriving in your life and successful. But this can take some engineering both in how you get there and what you do once you're there. For example, those in their later years or retirement might want to spend their days experiencing a profound sense of persistent joy and wonder. For those with careers and families, a deeply calm, non-reactive, and peaceful state might be more ideal, so they excel in their jobs, and most effectively raise their families.



You get the idea. We've researched the types of Fundamental Wellbeing for nearly twenty years in a wide range of people all over the world. Through our research, we've helped hundreds to navigate and settle into the optimum form of Fundamental Wellbeing by helping them to understand the process and use specific practices that allow them to reach and deepen into what is most aligned with their life.

While it's okay for each Finder or tradition to pick a favorite location, there's no reason to think that makes it the best location for everyone. Our research actually shows the opposite. Different locations bring different ways of experiencing the world. Some are optimal for some things but not for others. The most important thing is to pursue the type or types that support your specific life situation and circumstances.

This takes us to our final myth. You might think that the more you can learn about Fundamental Wellbeing, the more likely you will be to reach it. Often the exact opposite is the case, as we'll see in our final chapter in this section...



## MYTH #10: LEARNING ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING IS THE BEST WAY TO GET THERE

It may seem counterintuitive, but our research revealed that one of the most important keys to transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing is to not intellectualize or study it too much as a topic. The more you do that, the more it becomes just an idea in your mind. The reality is that if you've never experienced Fundamental Wellbeing, you can't form an idea about it that is so accurate that it helps you to actually get there. The exact opposite happens.

Knowledge can help in providing context after transitioning or even during transitioning. However, once you actually experience Fundamental Wellbeing, you'll realize that what you thought you understood about it was way off. You'll have the classic "aha" moment where what you've studied or read suddenly makes sense, but in ways you could have never imagined prior to the experience itself.

Until that point, the more you form ideas about what Fundamental Wellbeing is and what it will be like, the further you get from the actual experience itself. Our research protocols are so successful because they are practice, not theory or idea, based. The protocols are simply sets of instructions for exercises that, when followed, produce a rapid, reliable, and safe transition to Fundamental Wellbeing for a majority of the people who use them. This is one of their greatest "secrets." They bring together the most reliable and effective methods that we found through our research, sequence them in a very precise way, avoid theory and other things that engage your mind, and set you on a course that gives you the best possible chance of reaching Fundamental Wellbeing.

This is exactly how you should think about structuring your own practice. Endless books and hours of YouTube videos about Fundamental Wellbeing only getting someone further and further away from it. One interesting thing we've noticed in our research is that people who use our protocol that know very little about what Fundamental Wellbeing is, often transition much more smoothly than those who have devoted a lot of time and effort to studying it. The reason for this is simple, they haven't built a mental model they have to escape from so they can transition like the more knowledgeable individuals have. They can just come in, do the work, and reap the benefits.



PART 2:

THE 5 KEYS  
TO REACHING  
FUNDAMENTAL  
WELLBEING



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE KEYS TO REACHING FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

This section covers how to use what our research has uncovered to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing. In this section, we're going to teach you the 5 most important lessons, or secrets, that emerged from our research on how to safely, rapidly, and reliably reach Fundamental Wellbeing. Some of these will sound familiar to you if you've already gone through the 10 myths, but here we'll be helping you put everything together into a usable and coherent whole that will speed you along on your path to Fundamental Wellbeing.

These truly are the key things that make all the difference, and this section will tell you everything you need to know to put them to work for you right away.

First, just a bit of housekeeping in case you're viewing this section out of order. Fundamental Wellbeing, is the term we use for so-called persistent higher levels of consciousness, such as: enlightenment, nonduality, persistent mystical states, unitive states, and so forth.

And the information here comes from data from the largest scientific psychology and cognitive neuroscience project of its kind in this area, one that has been running for nearly 20 years as this is written, and that has involved thousands of research participants spread across six continents who experience Fundamental Wellbeing.

This includes over a thousand individuals who were already in Fundamental Wellbeing when they entered the research program, as well as thousands of others who have participated in experiments that helped people to transition using exactly these types of techniques.

Finally, it's important to keep in mind that the information presented here is only for people who want to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing. It is for taking action, not acquiring theory. As mentioned in the "10 Myths" section, over our years of research we've learned that theory and ideas about Fundamental Wellbeing actually take you further away from it. If you're interested in actually reaching it you need a proven, action-based methodology like the one here.

Okay, let's get started!

First, let's reiterate our earlier warning. Remember what we said in the previous section on the 10 Myths about how the mind can trip you up? You have to be diligent in making sure that doesn't happen as you go through the rest of the materials here.

For example, you will probably have heard of, and maybe even have tried, some of the methods mentioned. Do not mistakenly think to yourself, "Oh I've tried that, so it won't work for me."

When something like this comes to mind, it's important to put it into context so you can keep an open mind. For example, each method has many ways it can be implemented. There are hundreds of different types and styles of mantras (a method of meditation that involves repeating words or phrases), for example. The odds of you having tried all variations of them are low to impossible. You may have tried some with varying degrees of success or even no success. Congratulations, that just means you've ruled out some things that might not work for you, but it doesn't mean that you won't find a mantra-style meditation a few hours from now that transitions you right away to Fundamental Wellbeing.

The mind is always trying to be negative, but for this process, you can't let it. You want to keep your mind as open as possible to benefit from what I'm sharing here today.

There are other examples, but I think you get the point. Be vigilant and don't let your mind trip you up.

The 5 keys you're about to learn emerged from a modern, scientific approach to this problem. Over nearly a decade, across six continents, literally thousands of research participants who experienced various forms of Fundamental Wellbeing participated in this intensive academic psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience-based research project. According to standard scientific practices, the project was peer-reviewed at every step, and its progress and findings have been presented widely at leading academic conferences and prominent universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Stanford.

These findings have also been tested experimentally for over seven years to determine if the original results were a fluke. They weren't. All of this research and the related experiments confirmed what you're about to learn.

Using these same methods, for many years, the research experiments have achieved success rates in from one day to four months with about 70% of participants. And most of the remaining participants experienced at least temporary periods of Fundamental Wellbeing that were heading in the right direction at the time their research cohort ended and the tracking stopped for them.

Most recently, the latest experimental protocols have pushed 80+% effectiveness in helping people persistently transition to Fundamental Wellbeing. By the time you read this, it's likely the team will have continued to improve upon these numbers. If you've been interested in this for any length of time, I know how impossible these numbers may sound to you. However, they are real and have been validated, peer-reviewed, and so on for many years.

What we share in this section is the foundation of what has made this research and experimental success possible. There's no reason you shouldn't be able to do the exact same thing we have using these 5 keys.

So, I hope you're ready to get down to what matters and what will make a difference for you because here we go...

# Key #1: Not all methods are equally effective

The first key emerged when it became clear that our research participants, across methodologies and continents, seemed to only list a few types of meditation and related methods as what assisted them with transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing.

So, Key #1 is that not all methods are created equal. Some work much better than others and for more people than others. In addition, some methods seem more suited for helping people to transition to specific types of Fundamental Wellbeing than others. The important lesson here is that you need to find and use the very best methods available if you're going to have a chance of transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing.

When you first get exposed to meditation and related methods, it's not uncommon to encounter claims from a person or group that they have the "best" or "most successful" method. So the notion that some methods are better than others often gets put into someone's head right from the start of their exploration. And, it's true.

Anyone can make up a meditation method and advertise it as the best, and plenty of people have, which leads to a confusing marketplace. As I write this, an internet search for "meditation method" brings up seventy-four million results. Talk about a confusing mess! How can anyone know where is best to start?

We are fortunate to have a global dataset that lets us know which methods worked the best for producing Fundamental Wellbeing, and it's the only place that this kind of information has been gathered that we know about. Unfortunately, we cannot share the exact methods and instructions we use in our protocols outside of our programs for liability reasons. These methods are extremely powerful, and typically we have tweaked them to make them even more so.

Our programs are set up so that the people who come into them are psychologically healthy. They are structured so people are monitored as they work their way through them, and each time we use a protocol, there is a professional psychological clinician on staff and available in case s/he is needed. We do everything possible to ensure that it is safe to use these ultra-powerful methods, and the even more powerful combinations of them that we create.

Unfortunately, that level of support is not available in a public resource like this book. Anyone can read it and jump right in, even if it is not psychologically safe for them to do so. We're interested in helping people, not potentially harming them, so that is not ethically acceptable to us. Our database and research, however, provides some clues that are very helpful for you in your search for a great method to try next.

For example, we can help to narrow down your list of things to try. Among the research population, the most successful types of methods were as follows:

- Awareness-centered practices: Directly placing attention on awareness itself using verbal and non-verbal techniques during individual and group practices.
- Direct inquiry: Using the mind, emotions, and sensations to actively dig into and seek the truth of one's self. This is done by constant attention to what the sense of self feels like or actively trying to deconstruct it through ongoing probing and questioning.
- Mantra-based practices: Using specific words or sounds as an object of concentration for meditative purposes. They may or may not have a meaning and can be recited aloud or silently. Found across all major religions and spiritual traditions, their most common purpose is to quiet the mind.
- Mindfulness-based practices: Contemplative and meditative techniques for focusing on the present moment in a nonreactive way. Generally, the goal is to obtain a stable, nonjudgmental awareness of arising thoughts, emotions, and sensations.
- Noting-based practices: Awareness and mental labeling of ongoing experience. Noting can be done silently or aloud. Both internal (thoughts, emotions, and sensations) and external events can be noted. Traditionally an individual practice, in recent years, forms of social noting have become popular that involve noting aloud with one or more others.

This is an incredibly important list for you to have, given the thousands of other methods that it excludes and prevents you from having to waste your time on.

If you analyzed our data, one thing you'd notice right away is that most techniques that rise to the top are ones that have been around for a long time, in many cases for centuries. They have been tweaked and tuned over that time by many people, and there are often many variations of them that have been created and used. In short, they are highly vetted. Presumably, in each period of their use, many other methods were experimented with that didn't work as well, and thus didn't propagate forward in time. But these did. They have literally stood the test of time. So a great place for you to start exploring is with these types of older methods.

Let me give you an example of one. Mantras are words or phrases you repeat silently or aloud. There are generally two ways to do this; one is repetitive, like consistently repeating a phrase or syllable. Alternatively, you can just mention them and let their flavor, so to speak, just sort of arise or be created in your mind and awareness, wait for that to fade, and then repeat the process.

Mantra methods have been documented to go back at least three-thousand years, so they have definitely stood the test of time. And they are used in a wide variety of cultures, including Eastern, Western, and indigenous religious and spiritual traditions. This is a mental hack that has been discovered by people all over the world and cultivated for all of recorded human history. In addition, it's praised by many people as working for them today.

This is a great example of what we refer to as a “gold-standard” method; it has:

1. Been around a long time
2. Been shown to work across most geographic regions and cultures
3. Has people today who praise its effectiveness worldwide

This method even has decades of scientific research into it that ranges from psychology and cognitive science to neuroscience and biology. Not every gold-standard method does, but this one happens to. So that is a fourth element that suggests it should be on anyone's short-list to try.

The downside of a method like this is that, because it is so widely practiced, there are many variations of it and it can be hard to know which one to pick. We know from our research that the second example I provided above is the most effective for people today, and we use a variation in our research protocols.

Unfortunately, most people who transition to Fundamental Wellbeing and go on to become teachers often wind up creating their own, often ineffective, methods. Post-transition to Fundamental Wellbeing, they think they have special insight, which is true. Unfortunately, it's also the case that they have typically lost touch with how non-Finders experience the world. That makes it nearly impossible for them to build an effective bridge to Fundamental Wellbeing.

It's likely that in every era, this process of Finders creating new methods was happening. The benefit of using older methods is there has been a filtering process that's already taken place. However, there are also some excellent contemporary methods.

For newer methods, you want to make sure that they have many people who testify that they work. Let me give you an example. One of the best methods from the last sixty years or so is called the Headless Way. Although it seems like a silly set of practices, it has worked for many people all around the world. I'm one of them, Headless Way is what transitioned me to what we call the Location 2 type of Fundamental Wellbeing (you can learn more about the types of Fundamental Wellbeing at <http://nonsymbolic.org>).



If you're going to use a contemporary method, you have to make sure it's a successful one like Headless Way. The only way to know is by searching online and seeing how many people said it transitioned them. Ignore anyone who talks about how a method made them feel better, and so on. Only pay attention to the number of people who said it got them to some form of persistent Fundamental Wellbeing.

Finally, there are two well-known types of meditation that didn't show up in our study as widely effective in transitioning people to Fundamental Wellbeing. No movement-based practices like Yoga rose to the top of the list. Exercises involving intentional breathing didn't either. These categories of methods are popular, and their absence from our list demonstrates the value of a broad-based research effort. They seem helpful at assisting people with reaching temporary states but not persistence.

Once you know how to narrow down which methods might be effective for you, the next step is to understand how to most efficiently select the best methods for you, right now. That's what we'll do in the next section.



## Key #2: Very few methods will work for you at any given time. You have to find your fit

This is a topic that most meditation systems and practitioners fear or try to avoid. It's very common in the meditation world for a teacher or system to insist that their method or methods are the best and are all you need. Unless you get extremely lucky, that's rarely the case.

This doesn't mean they are being disingenuous. For example, teachers might advocate the thing that worked best for them, and genuinely feel it will be what works best for others as well, if only they'll keep at it. Or they might have a strong intuition about their method or methods that seems ultimately true to them.

It's important to keep in mind that every system, no matter how old, is ultimately started by someone who thinks they have found the answer. As systems survive for longer and longer, more voices join in and they splinter. Usually, this happens because people start off in the tradition but discover something either slightly or very different worked for them. Then, they teach that.

Although these folks mean well, that doesn't necessarily mean you should accept what they say. Having said that, it can be very helpful to learn a specific form of meditation from someone who has been practicing and teaching it for a while. They will have most likely gained experience across a wide range of students, some of which may be quite helpful for you and save you some time.

The most important thing to remember about the second key is that even the most gold-standard methods are not applicable to everyone. You must find the method or methods within them that will work for you.

During our research, we saw that many Finders had tried several of the gold-standard forms of meditation our research uncovered, while often telling us that only one or two worked for them. The interesting thing was that it was never the same ones from person to person.

This meant that although people had tried these various effective forms of meditation-type methods, different ones had worked for different people. We're years further in our research than when we made this initial observation, yet it remains quite shocking on the one hand and completely commonsense on the other.

The best way to sum it up is that different methods work for different people at different times. At any given time, it's likely that only a small number of methods will work for you. As you use them, "you" will change. It's possible the method you find will take you all the way to Fundamental Wellbeing. If that happens, great. It's also possible that it will produce some change in that direction, you will fall out of alignment with it, and then need to find a one.

Just because a method stops working, it doesn't mean it will stop working forever. As you continue to change over time, you can come back into alignment with methods that stopped working for you. And methods that had never worked can start working. Sometimes people think that as they go along and try different methods, it's like scratching items off a large list. That once an item is scratched off, it's scratched off forever. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It's a good idea to occasionally re-try major, gold-standard methods that weren't working the last time you tried them, and maybe have never worked for you because you never know when they might start working.



It's actually even more complicated than this because not all of each method may be effective for you. It's very possible that only a part of a technique may be effective. Your most effective method may be a combination of pieces from different methods combined into a highly effective new method that is relevant only to you. If this seems confusing to you, you **can view a video of me** teaching a session during Stanford University's Contemplation by Design Summit. In it, I walk people through variations of a number of the most effective meditation-type methods.

It might also be the case that two or three methods, used in a specific order or at very specific times, are the key to maximum effectiveness. Customization is the key. Because one size doesn't fit all, you may have to put in a little extra time to figure out what will work best for you. Right about now, you're probably asking yourself how to do that.

# HOW DO YOU KNOW A METHOD IS WORKING?

Now that you know the importance of matching up to a method, how do you figure out which method or methods work for you? You have to try them. We've collected enormous amounts of psychological data in an effort to try to match people to methods. At least as of when I'm writing this, those efforts have failed.

For many years now, the success of our programs has come down to our participants systematically trying the gold-standard methods we uncovered and modified, in a highly specific and structured way. You can easily adopt a similar system on your own, and here we are giving you all of the important elements.

Although this may seem surprising, generally one week is enough time for you to know whether you are aligned with a method or not. Alignment can be tricky to learn on your own, but here are guideposts to help you. It can show up as increases in happiness and wellbeing, less reactivity, better emotional regulation, less tendency to be drawn into thoughts, a quieting of the inner critical voice in your head, a greater sense of presence or being in the moment, fewer memories from the past arising and having less emotional charge when they do, and related things.

It doesn't matter if these are happening inside of meditation or during the rest of your day. We generally prefer progress indicators that come from outside your meditation sessions during our experiments.

It's important not to mistake things like relaxation for progress. There are many ways to relax, and certainly meditation-related methods can relax you. However, when it comes to reaching Fundamental Wellbeing, relaxation is not necessarily progress. The opposite of relaxation that people also sometimes mistake for progress is focus.

Simply put, the types of gains we measure when people transition to Fundamental Wellbeing in wellbeing, stress, depression, anxiety, cognitive capacity, meaning, loneliness, and more do not come from relaxation or focus. If that were the case, other types of relaxation exercises would produce similar deep and lasting effects, as would training your brain to focus on things like mental puzzles.

If you experience relaxation or focus when you meditate but then find yourself stressed out again soon after you stop, that's a sign that you're not making real progress. You want to see changes that last well beyond your meditation sessions and into even the most difficult and stressful situations in your life.

The amount of time you spend meditating is critically important. You should be able to determine if a type of meditation is working for you in as little as a week, if you put in enough time. If you use the technique for an hour a day, a week is plenty. If you use it for twenty to thirty minutes per day, it might take as long as four to six weeks to get a proper read on whether it is truly working, or just relaxing you.

If the opposite of some or all of the types of things I mentioned previously (wellbeing, etc.) show up and persist as you try a method out, it's probably not the right method for you. Consider moving on and trying a different one. But there's the hitch.

It's important to give a method enough time because you can have a rocky start with a method you're aligned with and have it turn out great toward the end of the trial period. You won't know unless you push through. If you're doing an hour a day, that means pushing through for an entire week. A method might feel out of alignment for five or even six days but then suddenly start to work.

Our research revealed that the length of meditation time really matters. By far, the best way to test a method is to give it at least an hour a day for a week. That may sound like a lot, and as you approach the forty-minute mark, you may notice it getting especially difficult.

It turns out that this is a key threshold with meditation for progress rather than just relaxation or focus. If you stick with it and apply yourself for the whole hour, the real magic will start to happen after about the forty to forty-five minute mark. So an hour of meditation gets you about fifteen minutes in this sweet spot.

What happens when you've found a method that seems to work great, and suddenly, it stops working? We'll find out next with Key #3...

## Key #3: Methods don't work forever. When they stop what you do next is very important

What should you do when your favorite method or methods stop working? This often concerns people because they think something has gone wrong. Actually, it is usually a good sign.

Most typically, it means you've made progress and outgrown your current method. It has changed you, and as a result, you're no longer aligned with the method that produced the changes. It's very important to know when this is the case, so you can just move on.

Sometimes, though, when a method stops working it can mean you are just in a lull with that method and it will work again. In this case you should stick with your current method. So, how do you tell? Through our research, we learned that the best way is to keep at it and see. If you're meditating our recommended hour a day, then go for another week or two and see if things head back in the right direction. If you're meditating for twenty to thirty minutes per day, you'll want to give it another four to six weeks. If the lull persists, it's time to resume your search and find the new method or methods that will work for you, so you can resume heading in the desired direction.

It's important to figure this out. You don't want to continue to use a method that is no longer working. At best it will prevent further progress, but often it will start to actually undo the progress it made. It's aligned with the old version of you; that's who it worked for, and it will have a tendency to pull you back in that direction if you keep sticking with it.

You want to be especially sensitive to when a method stops working. How do you know? In our experience, people can usually "just tell." When you've been using a method that is heading in the right direction, it's often clear when that stops being the case.



However, it's also a good idea to keep in mind the types of progress we're looking for and make sure they are still happening. Recall from earlier when I mentioned that this can show up as increases in happiness and wellbeing, less reactivity, better emotional regulation, less tendency to be drawn into thoughts, a quieting of the inner critical voice in your head, a greater sense of presence or being in the moment, and fewer memories from the past arising and having less emotional charge when they do. So if the opposite of these types of things starts happening, that's a good indication you should move on.

Of course, things will come up in your life, emotional triggers will occur, and so on. These don't necessarily indicate a lack of progress. You want to look at things overall, including the overall trend of things in the previous list, not specific incidents. Incidents will come and go, both positive and negative; it's the overall trends that matter.

There's another key element in the mix beyond your main practice. We'll cover that next...



## Key #4: It's important to mix the best positive psychology practices with meditation if you want to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing

Meditation-type methods are widely praised as a near “miracle cure” for increasing wellbeing, reducing depression and anxiety, and so on. However, the reality is that “gold-standard” practices like these act powerfully on the brain, and not always in the direction of increasing wellbeing. There is a growing amount of research into this, from Ivy League universities to meditation halls.

As you experiment with methods following our advice here, most won't work for you. The ones that won't might wind up being neutral, or they could produce a negative emotional reaction in you. Even methods that work for you will act on your system in a way that might trigger negative emotions at times, and maybe even old traumas and similar things that are stored up from the past. So what should you know to ensure this doesn't happen to you and to manage it if it somehow occurs?

The first thing we recommend is that you immediately stop doing any practice that lowers your wellbeing after practicing it for one hour a day for one week. It's that simple. There is nothing in our research that suggests a prolonged “no pain, no gain”-type approach is needed to find your fit. You need to give a method a week of one hour a day practice to find out if it works for you, but that's it.

Methods that have stood the test of time are typically powerful. It's important that you treat them with a healthy dose of respect. If you encounter one that consistently produces a less than positive effect on you, you should not assume that continuing to use it will somehow lead to a positive outcome. There's simply no reason to risk it, given the wide variety of methods that are available.

Many methods might occasionally bring up a less-than-positive experience in you. That's fine. What you want to avoid are the ones that do so consistently, or that bring up very strong negative experiences.

There are many well-researched positive psychology exercises that can be used to beneficially impact your mental and emotional wellbeing. These include things like forgiveness exercises, gratitude exercises, positive intent and visualization type exercises, and more.

Most books written about this by the self-help and personal development folks are inaccurate, and their version can actually make you less happy. There are important nuances that scientists have discovered that are important to get right.

For example, the popular method of journaling is not always good in and of itself. Nor is one way of doing it. People are often told to journal by either reliving an experience or analyzing it. However, if you relive a negative experience, you get less happy and analyzing a positive experience can also make you less happy. So you need to relive happy experiences as you journal and analyze negative ones to get a consistently beneficial effect.

Generally, only the scientists in this field understand this detail and build it into their exercises and books. I always recommend using them. I've put a few books from some of the best researchers below, along with their Amazon.com link. You don't have to order these books to get the author's advice. You can also search their names on the internet and learn more about what they recommend. They often have helpful videos, articles they've written, and so on freely available.

1. **Happier by Tal Ben-Shahar**
2. **The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want by Sonja Lyubomirsky**
3. **59 Seconds: Think a Little, Change a Lot by Richard Wiseman**

These practices also come in handy if your wellbeing starts to slip as a result of a method you're trying out. When that happens, just go double down on some positive psychology practices and boost your wellbeing back up.

Given that Fundamental Wellbeing is your goal, you might be interested to know that it's important to have as much of it as you can as you start your meditation-type practices. That's one of the best ways to prevent negative experiences during meditation, and it is also one of the best ways to ensure success with transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing.

Through our research, we've learned that the higher someone's wellbeing, the more likely they are to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing using meditation. It's important to note that this doesn't mean that depressed people don't transition; they do, even severely depressed people. However, on average, the higher someone's wellbeing the more likely they are to transition. This, and the fact that there are so many scientifically proven interventions available to boost wellbeing, make it obvious that it's a good idea to use positive psychology methods and do everything you can to increase your wellbeing while trying to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing.

Finally, don't be afraid to reach out for professional, clinical help if you need it. It can be very beneficial. It's important for the clinician you choose to have an in-depth understanding of the effects of meditation, and of Fundamental Wellbeing. And you should definitely get in touch with a clinical professional if you have any intense negative emotional reactions because of meditation-type methods. They can also be super helpful in clearing the way for you to maximize your meditation practice in general.

All too often, people only associate clinicians with problems. The reality is that they are highly trained and experienced professionals that can help anyone to thrive in life. We've found that the minority of people who don't transition using our protocols often do after a few sessions with a clinician. Typically they have some trauma issues that are blocking their transition, or some belief system things to work on. These generally don't take long to handle, and then they are able to finally transition into Fundamental Wellbeing.

This takes us up to our final, and most important key. If you just do this one thing (that you've probably never even heard of before) it will lead to your best chance of reaching Fundamental Wellbeing.

## Key #5: The most important key to reaching Fundamental Wellbeing, “sinking in”

Although this part of the book contains a wide range of our groundbreaking and very important findings on how to reach Fundamental Wellbeing, this section contains what is probably the single most important one.

As you meditate, and even just as you go through life, it's very likely that you are going to have experiences that seem like they are in the direction of Fundamental Wellbeing. Fundamental Wellbeing and its components are beyond the scope of this book. To learn more about it you can check out our landmark book on it, **The Finders**, as well as the research center's website (<http://nonsymbolic.org>). It can be helpful for you to be at least somewhat familiar with this before you read this section.

We think of the transition to Fundamental Wellbeing as a battle for resources between competing parts of your brain. Up to this point in your life, you've developed habits that have created and supported your current sense of self. These habits are enshrined in your brain in many ways, for example, in thicker versus thinner regions, more or fewer connections within and between areas, and so on.

The areas, connections, etc. within your brain that you've been supporting with your current sense of self are strongly established. They've had a lot of support from you in the past. In turn, they have supported you by keeping things heading in your old, familiar direction.

Every action and experience have communicated what you want to your brain over your lifetime and built the capacity for you to experience it. As that infrastructure of support was built up in the brain by those actions and experiences, your brain became increasingly locked in and limited in terms of what it allowed you to experience.

It's likely that your brain felt it was doing this in symbiosis with you. That it was helping to support you in what you wanted, as best it knew how to do. This was true for both the best of times, and the worst of times in your life, including how it responded to traumas.

The transition to Fundamental Wellbeing involves a new way of experiencing life, one that is very different from what comes before it. If you've been trying to reach Fundamental Wellbeing for a while, you've probably noticed the tendency for your brain to want to keep you locked into your old or normal experience of self. This can be frustrating, but it thinks it's doing what you've been asking it to for your entire life.

Even if you spend some of your time meditating or consuming media about Fundamental Wellbeing, or something similar, the reality is that you're spending nearly every other moment of your life communicating to your brain, via your actions, that you want it to support the sense of self you have been collaborating on building up over the course of your lifetime.

One of the most important things you need to do to successfully transition to Fundamental Wellbeing is to find ways to communicate to the brain in its own language. The primary language of the brain is the language of experience. That's one reason why one of the 10 Myths debunks the idea that learning more about Fundamental Wellbeing is a good thing. You need to be taking actions to get there, which is what we've taught you in this part of the book, not be spending your time trying to learn more about it. It might seem to you that the brain exists largely to hold your intellect, but it's actually far more rooted in experience.

As you use meditation and related practices, and even just go through life, you will probably have experiences that sound like things you read in **The Finders** or our **core academic paper** on Fundamental Wellbeing, or have seen in one of our many **online videos** that cover it. For example, perhaps you'll experience yourself as somehow, maybe even somewhat oddly, feeling expanded beyond your physical body. Or perhaps you'll experience an unusual sense of internal spaciousness you never have before. Or maybe you'll have a moment of intense love that goes beyond anything you've experienced in intensity. Or maybe you'll experience an unusual feeling of aliveness in the body. Or any one of many other things we describe as being part of Fundamental Wellbeing.

We recognize those things may not be real for you right now. In fact, you may have no idea what they feel like. Once you have them you'll most likely realize that the ideas your mind had about them and how they would feel were totally wrong. However, by reading this book or absorbing some of our other materials about Fundamental Wellbeing, you can at least be on the lookout for these types of things and put yourself in a position to better recognize them when they occur.

That's important because when that happens you can put and hold your attention on them, and that's by far the best way to let your brain know that you want more of something to occur. By putting your attention on an experience, you're communicating in the brain's language. You're telling it, "This is the type of experience that I want to have occur more often." And because each of these mini-experiences of aspects of what Fundamental Wellbeing feels like points in the general direction of Fundamental Wellbeing itself, what you're communicating at a deeper level is that you don't just want that aspect of the experience, but you want the full experience of Fundamental Wellbeing itself.

In the early versions of our scientific experiments, we used words like isness or beingness or presence as key things to ask people to be on the lookout for. Now, many more resources like the ones mentioned in this section are available, so you have additional nuance you can keep an eye out for. However, these original terms are still powerful.

We originally used several because different people had different types of experiences. The experience of isness might make sense to one person, for example, but not another. These words, isness, beingness, and presence, are literal descriptions. They aren't metaphors. When you have the direct experience of isness, you know it. The same for beingness and presence. They all point to a very foundational experience. Having just one is all you need.

Think of it this way: a chair might have many attributes. It could be brown, have a back, have four legs, have a cushion, and so on. These attributes, though, are just components of the reality that it either exists or doesn't as a chair. It either is or is not. Either it has an isness as a chair or it doesn't.

Similarly, you have a seemingly endless array of attributes and other things that are true about you. You spend nearly all, if not all, of your life focused on them, so much so that you never really get down to the core experience of just being.



Or that, despite all that other stuff, you just are. There is an isness to your very essence. A beingness. A presence.

That's what these types of words try to convey, not so you can obsess about them and your mind can figure out what they mean and create an object from that in your mind that you can experience. Rather it's the exact opposite. So your mind can recognize these things when they occur. It can never understand or create this type of experience. What's being referred to here contains the mind, not the other way around.

This is important because if you haven't already, it's likely that at some point you'll have one of these experiences. When you do, it's probably the most important thing that can happen to you, and you want to stop whatever else you are doing and just put your attention on it. Getting to this experience so you can increasingly focus on it is the reason you are doing meditation-type practices.

Let me say that again because it is an important point. The only reason to practice a meditation-type method is so it can lead to one of these types of experiences. When it does, your only goal should be to rest your attention on the experience for as long as it occurs, or for as long as you have time. This is the most important secret about how to reach Fundamental Wellbeing. For years in our research programs, we've referred to this process as sinking in. You have to be careful about how you do this, so the next section provides detailed instructions on how to get it right.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR SINKING IN

If you imagine the feeling you get when you're immersed in a very pleasurable experience, such as taking a warm bath, you'll get what we mean by the phrase sinking in. While in the bath, there's a way you can just let go, sink into, and become immersed in the pleasure of the experience. You're at ease but still attending to the experience. Your attention is definitely on it, but there's a quality to that attention. A relaxed, appreciative, sinking-in kind of quality to it.

What happens if you put another kind of attention on that bath? For example, what if you bring an analytical form of attention to it? It's not as pleasurable, is it? It's a totally different kind of experience. You can feel the difference right now in your imagination, can't you?

In one example, you're sinking in and immersing yourself in the experience and the pleasure it gives you. In another, you're paying attention to it, analyzing it, and so on, but the result is that you are mostly distancing yourself from directly feeling the experience itself. You're still in the bath, feeling it to some extent, but what you're actually doing is making a mental object out of it that is increasingly separating you from the actual, lived experience rather than immersing yourself experientially in the moment-to-moment richness of it.

Far too many people do the latter when they have glimpses of Fundamental Wellbeing or one of its components, and the same thing happens. Instead of communicating to their brain that more of the experience is desired, they communicate that the experience is to be distanced from, analyzed, objectified in the mind, and understood as a mentally represented experience — not had as a deeply-lived experience. This only makes it harder to get back to, and it's the opposite of what you want to do.



So, when you experience something that is in the direction of Fundamental Wellbeing, a glimpse of the thing itself, or even a prolonged experience of it that has the possibility to become persistent, the single most important thing you can do in those moments is sink into it. Whatever you are doing, even if you are in the middle of meditation, stop and just sink into it like you would a warm bath. Let your brain know that this is what you want for your life now. Put attention on it, in the right way, so new connections in your brain are formed and strengthened, and the old ones wither.

Do it in this “best practice”-kind of way so your brain itself becomes a willing partner in the process not an adversary that is trying to make the experience go away, all the while thinking that it is helping you get back to your prior way of experiencing the world, because you have communicated so consistently to it that this is what you have wanted over your entire life up to that point.

Again, there is literally nothing more important for you to do if your goal is to reach Fundamental Wellbeing. You do whatever your chosen practices are in order to finally find the right one that gives you the glimpses you need, and then you sink into the glimpses when they occur until Fundamental Wellbeing is persistent for you.

For some, their transition to persistent Fundamental Wellbeing happens on the very first glimpse, for others, it takes sinking into many glimpses before they become a Finder, and for still others, it happens at some degree in between. Regardless of what is true in your case, this is the path to persistent Fundamental Wellbeing that has worked for so many others who came before you and will work for you as well.

# SUMMARY OF THE 5 KEYS TO REACHING FUNDAMENTAL WELLBEING

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There was an enormous amount of information here, so let's take a moment to bring it all together. In this part of the book, we looked at the key findings from our long-term, large-scale, global research project as it relates to best practices for transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. We covered the key background information you need to know, including the following:

- 1** That not all methods are created equal. Some are better than others, and you want to use the best ones you can to give yourself the greatest opportunity to maximize the benefits you get from your efforts.
- 2** That knowing some, or even many, of the best methods isn't enough. You must find the ones that work best for you right now. We also talked about how methods are created by people. And you're a person! So you can feel comfortable that it's okay to modify any of them, combine them with others, and so on — so they are maximally effective for you.
- 3** We talked about the fact that methods that work well for you now will either transition you quickly or most likely stop working at some point. At first, they are in sync with you, which allows them to work. Then, they change you and are no longer matched up to the "new you." At that point, you need to find a new method that fits who you are now.
- 4** We also talked about how methods can stop working for a bit but not be out of sync with you, and how to figure out whether that has happened. And we discussed that you need to move on when a method stops working for you, no matter how attached you've been to that method.
- 5** We talked about how to best manage your meditation practice to avoid negative experiences by using practices from positive psychology, and the benefits of being in higher levels of wellbeing if your goal is to transition to Fundamental Wellbeing.
- 6** Finally, we covered the most important key of all, one that virtually no one else ever seems to mention — the critical importance of sinking in. We discussed how the only reason we meditate or use other practices in the first place is to get glimpses of experiences that relate to Fundamental Wellbeing, so that we can sink into them and communicate to the brain that we want that to be our new normal.

What you have here is the most comprehensive and effective protocol for transitioning to Fundamental Wellbeing. It is research driven and grounded in the world's largest scientific project of its kind. Millions of dollars of resources and nearly twenty years of work have gone into creating, testing, and refining it. Although we've distilled it down to a simple series of steps, there's nothing else like it, nor anything that comes even close to its effectiveness. Now, it's up to you to use it! See you on the other side...

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# ABOUT THE RESEARCH CENTER

The Center for the Study of Non-Symbolic Consciousness is one of the world's leading research organizations that is dedicated to the rigorous scientific study of the highest forms of human wellbeing.

For millennia, these ways of experiencing life have been known by (and often been the foundation of) religious, spiritual, and philosophical systems worldwide. Common terms for them include enlightenment, nonduality, persistent mystical experience, unitive consciousness, the peace that passeth understanding, and literally hundreds of others – though it is important to know that atheists and agnostics also routinely experience them.

Their work in this area is widely recognized. It's been presented for over a decade at leading scientific conferences and prominent academic institutions, well known and highly regarded public events, featured in countless video segments, articles, and interviews, mentioned in leading books, and much more.

Academically, they refer to these ways of experiencing the world as “Persistent and Ongoing forms of Non-Symbolic Experience” (PNSE/ONE). Publicly they refer to them as “Fundamental Wellbeing”. People who experience this are referred to as “Finders”.

You can learn more at:  
**NonSymbolic.org**

