

TAO FORCE

**ACHIEVING EMOTIONAL MASTERY
THROUGH THE TAO PRINCIPLES**

ALEC ALPERT

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INTRODUCTION

As the author of this book, I am delighted to share with you my journey of self-discovery and emotional mastery through the principles of Tao. This book is a culmination of my own experiences and insights as I navigated the ups and downs of life and discovered the profound wisdom of Tao that has transformed my understanding of emotions and how to navigate them.

At the core of this book are the three essential Tao principles that have become the guiding principles in my life - Wu Wei, Yin and Yang, and Tao Te Ching. When understood and applied, these principles can help you achieve emotional mastery and live a more balanced, harmonious, and fulfilling life.

The first principle, Wu Wei, is the art of non-doing, going with the flow, and allowing things to unfold naturally. It is about letting go of control and surrendering to the rhythm of life. Through Wu Wei, you will learn how to release resistance, reduce stress, and cultivate a state of inner calm, allowing your emotions to flow without getting overwhelmed.

The second principle, Yin and Yang, represents the balance of opposites and the interconnectedness of all things. It is about recognizing the dynamic interplay between light and dark, hot and cold, joy and sorrow, and embracing the natural cycles of life. Understanding Yin and Yang will help you navigate the complexities of emotions, recognize their inherent duality, and find the equilibrium between them.

The third principle, the Tao Te Ching, is a classical Taoist text that offers profound insights into the nature of existence and the way of living in harmony with the Tao. It is a guidebook for life, providing practical wisdom on cultivating virtues, practicing mindfulness, and living in alignment with the Tao. The teachings of the Tao Te Ching will help you gain clarity, develop resilience, and cultivate a deeper understanding of yourself and the world around you.

My journey into the Tao began when I met a Tao master who opened my eyes to the metaphysical aspects of existence, pointing to the higher truths beyond physical reality. I was fascinated by the profound wisdom of Tao and embarked on a journey of self-improvement, seeking to understand and integrate its principles into my life.

Through years of study, reflection, and practice, I gradually adapted the Tao principles as a way of life. I learned to let go of control and surrender to the natural flow of life, embrace the inherent duality of emotions, and live in alignment with the universal principles of the Tao. As a result, I have experienced a profound transformation in my emotional well-being, relationships, and overall sense of fulfillment.

I can confidently state that practicing Tao has been a profound and life-changing journey for me. It has helped me achieve emotional mastery, gain clarity and resilience, and live a more balanced and harmonious life. I believe that by embracing the principles of Tao, you, too, can achieve emotional mastery and experience a more profound sense of joy, peace, and fulfillment.

TRANSFORMING LIFE BEGINS

Harry McGuire sat in front of a computer screen in the office of a large production building, working on a product design. It was late Friday evening, and almost everyone had gone home; the building was empty and quiet. Nevertheless, he had to complete a particular portion of the design to meet a deadline in a few days. Harry enjoyed working for a major medical device company as an electrical engineer.

I feel lonely now. Harry stared at the screen. Frankly, I feel lonely all the time. I feel emptiness, some black hole that never goes away. It's like a wound that never heals. Most of the time, the pain is bearable. I feel somewhat happy, but sometimes it gets out of hand. Sometimes, I can't even sleep because it's so overwhelming.

Harry leaned his chair back, extended his legs, and stared out the window. A few cars remained in the large parking lot. *I am thirty now and single. I wonder if getting married could solve my loneliness problem ... I would have a companion, somebody to talk to, have sex with, and watch TV together. Then, children would eventually arrive. Raising children keeps a couple busy. There's no time to feel lonely then, that's for sure.*

One day, Harry's successful artist cousin invited him to a party at his house, stating that there would be many exciting people and Harry would enjoy socializing. Harry accepted the invitation.

A tall, slim man with a beard and penetrating live eyes was the center of the party's attention. He spoke with a soft, eloquent voice and looked in his mid-sixties. His name was Greg Boulder. Everyone asked him questions about life, and he gladly provided his insights. Harry enjoyed listening to Greg and was impressed with the man's erudition.

As the party went on, Harry managed to have a few private minutes with Greg, complimented him on his insights, and asked about Greg's background. Greg told him that he had a degree in philosophy, taught philosophy at the university, and published many books, essays, and articles on philosophy and spiritual development. He lived in India and Tibet in ashrams and monasteries, where he learned and practiced Tao, Buddhism, and Zen, and now runs a yoga and meditation center adjacent to his house, providing group and individual sessions.

"I never thought much about Eastern teachings and spirituality," Harry admitted. "I am used to logical thinking, scientific experiments, reasoning, and data. I was raised with the mindset that if it cannot be scientifically proven, it does not exist. I've heard of Tao but do not know what it is. Can you tell me a little bit about it?"

"Of course. Tao originated in China two and a half thousand years ago by the sage Lao Tzu, who compiled his insights in his immortal book, *Tao Te Ching*. Tao is not a doctrine, philosophy, system, religion, or dogma. Tao does not worship any deities. It is the most penetrating of insights into the universe; it is how to live fulfilling lives according to nature's immutable laws. It is comprehensive and goes far beyond logical thinking because, in essence, life is illogical and paradoxical. Lao Tzu simply reflects life. He does not add anything to it; he merely accepts

whatsoever it is.

“Tao transforms the lives of those who practice and understand it. Tao can resolve emotional problems. Loneliness, boredom, depression, anxiety, the meaning of life, the origin of the universe, and much more are all the domain of Tao; it is so vast, it is nature’s force,” Greg answered.

As they continued talking, Greg learned about Harry’s background and that Harry would like Greg to help him with loneliness, boredom, and anxiety. So they agreed to have individual sessions at Greg’s yoga and meditation center.

OVERCOMING LONELINESS

When Harry arrived at Greg's French Chateau-style house, he was greeted by an assistant who led him to a spacious study allocated for private sessions. The room contained bookshelf units along the floor's walls up to the ceiling, carefully arranged with probably a couple of thousand books. Most of the books were hardcover and in fine binding, covering various topics such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Tao, Tantra, Zen, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Greek philosophy, yoga, psychoanalysis, and European and American classical literature.

As Harry waited in a comfortable chair for Greg's arrival, he perused the books around him, feeling impressed by the wide variety of subjects in the library.

When Greg entered the study, he warmly greeted Harry and explained that their sessions would be based on Tao teachings, with the first session's topic being loneliness. Harry then opened up about his experience with loneliness, describing it as a sense of emptiness inside him, a black hole or wound that never seems to heal. He felt something was missing from his life, but he couldn't identify it. Meanwhile, he observed people around him socializing, traveling, and enjoying life, and he felt like the only one experiencing loneliness. Harry struggled to suppress his feelings of loneliness, but it only seemed to exacerbate his sense of unhappiness and boredom. He even questioned the meaning of life at times.

Greg thought about what Harry said for a few moments and then began:

“Loneliness is most people's problem, though they usually camouflage their real feelings. Some people experience mild loneliness, some moderate loneliness, and some severe loneliness, so severe that they cannot cope with it and become drug addicts, alcoholics, or, worse yet, commit suicide. The unpleasant emotion of loneliness is a complex phenomenon. But first, tell me how you cope with your loneliness?” Greg asked.

Harry thought briefly and replied, “I try to avoid being alone. I go out to bars, spend time with my girlfriend, attend parties, go to football or baseball games, and watch TV. In other words, I try to be with people as much as possible. But since I'm single, I'm alone in my apartment most of the time, which is when loneliness torments me. Do you think I will not feel as lonely if I get married?”

Greg paused for a moment as the loud sound of a thunderstorm and rain pinging against the glass interrupted him.

He went on, “If you marry, your loneliness may not be as severe, but your wife will expect to resolve her loneliness, too. So what happens? Two lonelinesses will stay together, expecting the other to resolve their loneliness. But even if your wife will be with you for your entire life, it is unlikely that the initial love and passion that drew you together will remain the same. Nothing ever stays the same. ‘They lived happily ever after’ is, of course, a fairytale. In real life, marriage will turn into a sort of coexistence.

“People change, society changes, the economy changes, political dogmas change, laws change, wars and revolutions happen, natural disasters happen, technology changes, and so forth. Life is always in flux; it is a river. Heraclitus said, ‘You cannot step into the same river twice.’ Nobody knows what will happen tomorrow, in a year, or ten years. Typically, people want permanence, the status quo, but this is not how life works. At best, the spouses can quietly tolerate each other, but the truth is that loneliness has not changed by marriage.

“Any relationship used to combat loneliness is an external device. Marriage and friendship are distractions to forgetting loneliness. Loneliness is strictly an internal problem. No matter what you do outside, loneliness will not go away. Therefore, all external efforts are futile.”

“I am not sure I understand how loneliness is an internal problem. What do you mean?” Harry asked.

*Without going abroad,
you can have knowledge of the world.
Without gazing at the stars,
you can perceive the heavenly Tao.
The more you wander, the less you know.
The wise explore without traveling,
discern without seeing,
finish without striving,
and arrive at their destination
without leaving home.
- Lao Tzu*

“Basically, we live in two worlds. One is an external world, and the other is an inner world. The external world is what you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. Your inner world is an invisible world of your consciousness, soul, and heart. A human being is not just a composite of a skeleton and organs. If man were just a mechanical thing without a soul, he would be an efficient, unemotional robot who never experiences loneliness, boredom, anxiety, insecurity, or health problems.

“What makes us different from robots is that we are spiritual beings. We are a blend of a physical body *and* a spirit. Ignoring our spiritual nature is akin to cutting ourselves in half. And one half cannot be a complete being or be joyous or blissful. Despair, frustration, and dissatisfaction are bound to happen. No amount of material things, no matter how expensive, can compensate for the lack of spirituality in life.

Harry was listening intently, absorbing the new insights.

“Though the spirit is a complex subject,” Greg continued. “For thousands of years, humanity has tried to figure out the phenomenon of the heart. Hundreds of different philosophies and dogmas tackle human nature and the workings of society, but even today, there is no universal agreement

on the ultimate truth. Nevertheless, everyone keeps searching to find out what works for them and makes them happy.

“Seekers have the option to adhere to the teachings of the West or East or some combination of both, though those teachings have two fundamentally different spiritual approaches. I studied Western and Eastern teachings and spent time with spiritual masters in India and Tibet. I find that the Tao, Buddhism, Zen, and yoga are the most advanced in interpreting the universe. I chose the Tao as the way of life because of all the teachings, the Tao, from my experience, is the best. Lao Tzu’s book *The Tao Te Ching*, translated as ‘The Way of Virtue,’ tackles the universal laws of life, or the laws of the Tao. The book contains eighty-one verses that cover all aspects of human life. The bottom line here is that if one lives by the principles of the Tao, that person will be virtuous, happy, healthy, and content. The teachings of the Tao boil down to aligning yourself with the solid and eternal laws of nature, which function impeccably and work in our favor.

“Because everything is the Tao, and we live in the Tao, loneliness is an intrinsic part of the universe. Loneliness has existed for eternity because the Tao is eternity and infinity. Therefore, there is nothing in the universe that does not contain loneliness. Let me give you an illustration. Imagine that you go up into space, say ten thousand miles above Earth. What happens? You will find yourself in the infinite vastness, very lonely space, absolute silence, and darkness; there will be nothing around you, only stars and galaxies staring at you from millions of light years away.

“From that vantage point, you will taste real loneliness. Go ahead and picture yourself in that spot. Really feel it. No people, no smartphones, no internet, no Facebook, no cars, no houses, no trees, no supermarkets, and no voices. Just you and the utter nothingness. That would be an example of ultimate loneliness. You would feel the presence of the Tao. You would understand that everything dwells in utter loneliness: planets, stars, galaxies, and asteroids. In other words, loneliness makes up our world. The entire universe is utter loneliness.

“Like fish in the ocean, we swim in the ocean of loneliness. That’s how our world is designed - utter loneliness. It has nothing to do with whether you have friends, family, or millions of followers on Facebook or Twitter.

“Loneliness existed before you and will exist after you die. Loneliness can be perceived as certain cosmic energy that penetrates everything and everyone in the microcosm and macrocosm. We consist of loneliness. We *are* loneliness. And if we are loneliness, how can we get rid of loneliness? It is impossible. It is permanently embedded in our psychic system. It is like our body has two arms, so we accept them as the needed body parts. So, too, our psychic system has loneliness as part of our psychic system.

At this point, Greg paused the discourse and asked if Harry would like to try matcha green tea. Harry had never tried that tea and asked what its benefits were. Greg explained that matcha green tea has many health benefits. It is high in antioxidants, calming, and can help improve focus and concentration, improve heart health, and aid in losing weight. Harry agreed to try the tea. Greg then asked his assistant to make them some.

While waiting for the tea, Greg continued, “So the only way to master loneliness is to accept it as a normal phenomenon - there is no need to fight it, just like we don’t fight our arms. Accepting loneliness, not fighting it, means authentically living with the Tao. Accepting loneliness means instantly releasing negative emotions. Hence, looking for another to solve your loneliness problem makes no sense. Live with an attitude that there is no other, as far as loneliness is concerned. Have a relationship because you have met a like-minded individual, not because you feel lonely. This will give you an immense feeling of freedom you did not have before.

“Once you accept loneliness as a normal condition, you still will feel it, but it will not bother you. Imagine that loneliness is some invisible entity that resides in you. So, separate yourself from it. It does not have to be your master dictating your feelings and behavior. Make it your servant instead. You are the master.

“Always remember the immutable law of the universe, of the Tao: We are born alone, we live alone, and we die alone. Moreover, because loneliness is an integral part of eternal existence, we may even say loneliness does not exist, to begin with. It is a figment of our imagination that emerges from conventional thinking. Accept these facts, and I promise you will live your life in a happier state.

“What are the benefits of understanding the nature of loneliness? First, you will be roaming this planet free from loneliness. Your life will have a different quality. You will feel you have been born again. Your dependency on others for companionship will go away. You will no longer be a beggar. People will notice your strength. You still will socialize, go out, and attend parties, but as a strong and self-sufficient person with complete freedom from others. You will drop your dreadful dependency on others. Eventually, you may reach the point where even if the whole human race suddenly vanishes and you are the only one left on the planet, the negative emotion of loneliness will not bother you.”

Harry was listening, feeling that the mystery of loneliness was finally resolved. *Feeling lonely is ok. Accept your loneliness, and it will stop bothering you. Relationships don’t solve loneliness. Everyone is lonely. There is no other ...* The thoughts were rushing through his head.

“Moreover, my friend,” Greg continued, “we have to distinguish loneliness from aloneness. Although in the dictionary they are synonymous, within the Tao, they are opposite. Loneliness is a negative state, and aloneness is a positive state. You can only enjoy aloneness when you no longer feel lonely and your need for the other no longer exists. Aloneness is the desired state. It is a beautiful state. It is being in your own company and having a relationship with yourself.

The assistant brought their teas on a tray and put them on Greg’s desk. After the assistant had left, they slowly sipped the matcha green tea, savoring its taste. Then, Greg asked if Harry liked the tea. Harry nodded that he did, and after blowing off some of the steam, he added that he was unsure if he would drink it daily because he usually drank coffee and soft beverages.

As they continued sipping tea, Greg went on, “In other words, what is essential is that you recognize your aloneness, which is the truth of the Tao. It is exciting to feel it because it is freedom from the crowd and others. It is the freedom from being lonely. Aloneness means

wholeness. You are total and complete; there is no need for others to complete you. Your goal is to find your deepest core where you are always alone and filled with all the beauties and blessings of existence.

*For the person who can live in this world,
And enjoy all it has to offer,
And participate completely within it,
Yet understand its transient nature,
And not get attached to its storms and drama,
For that person, peace has been found,
For you have a Source
You don't yet understand.
- Lao Tzu*

“Once you have tasted your aloneness, the pain of loneliness will disappear and be replaced with a new flow of peace, joy, and bliss. You will have a different kind of relationship with people that will have an entirely different quality to it. It will not be of need but out of having so much that you want to share. You will have a new feeling of elation that will enter your being, creating the feeling of wanting to share your joy. You have always been begging. And now, when you share, there is no question of begging; it doesn't matter with whom you share. It can be the same individual for your entire life, or it can be different individuals, whoever happens to be near to you.

“In aloneness, you enjoy being by yourself. And if one is lucky enough to be creative, that person can spend their time alone creating. Maybe this person is a writer, a composer, a painter, a photographer, or simply enjoying fixing cars, houses, or whatever. It really does not matter, as long as one is immersed in creativity. When people create, time flies. Let's say a writer must spend most of the day alone and in seclusion; otherwise, this writer will never accomplish anything. If a writer cannot handle loneliness, then that person will surely fail as a writer.

“I am wondering if monks are masters of aloneness?” Harry asked.

“They are, but you don't have to become a monk to enjoy solitude. The Tao teaches that you have to be in the world but not be of the world. Be an active member of society, but do not depend on others for loneliness or anything else for that matter. Be as self-sufficient as you can. Never be a beggar. Go to work, go out, party, have a girlfriend, friends, travel the world, and enjoy life to the fullest.”

“Do you read books? Do you have a library?” asked Greg.

“I read engineering books for my profession and have maybe forty engineering books in my library,” Harry said.

“I recommend you also start reading books on self-development, including those on human psychology and spirituality. If you want to live in a state of happiness, you need to embark on a spiritual journey. None of the personal problems can be successfully solved without becoming spiritual,” Greg suggested.

“By becoming spiritual, do you mean I have to join some religious organization?” Harry asked.

Greg paused for a moment gathering his thoughts while Harry was sipping his tea and listening.

“No, I do not mean you to become religious,” Greg went on. “Being religious and being spiritual are two different things. Becoming spiritual means living in the Tao. Let me explain. We just looked into the nature of loneliness, and how it can be dissolved by accepting it as a normal phenomenon because within the Tao, loneliness is normal. The same Tao principle of nonduality applies to all other parts of life. We need to be aware that from the moment we are born, we are conditioned to live in the duality of life, or the opposites of life. Positive – negative. Love – hate. Beautiful – ugly. Tall – short. Black – white. Saint - sinner. Good – bad. Sad – happy. And so on.

“Every time something pops up, we immediately choose one thing and reject another. It has been our modus operandi, so to speak, that we take for granted. We always assess one against another. We always rate. These days, the rating has become an international obsession. We turned into a society of raters. We immediately receive an email to rate the product or service when we purchase something. Every time we visit the dentist, we get a survey to fill out. When we buy a car or house, we get requests for surveys and ratings. Everybody and everything must be rated. Politicians, presidents, broadcasters, CEOs, managers, workers, and even dogs and cats are rated, too. Every day we hear and see never-ending polls on this or that. This president is good, but that president is terrible.

“Emotional pain exists because we are divided. What we reject causes us pain. If we want to live in bliss, we must drop the division. There is only one thing in the Tao: unity, no division. Positive and negative, good and bad, saint and sinner are all the same. It sounds paradoxical, I know, but the Tao is paradoxical and illogical; that is how true life is. The division is the root cause of the problem. We are against ourselves; we fight ourselves; we hurt ourselves for no reason or because we are not aware yet. Duality creates antagonism in us. Accepting the opposites is the door to bliss.

“Let’s say sadness visits you. You could have a little dialog with sadness in your head that goes like this: ‘Ok, miss Sadness, how can I help you today?’ She says, ‘Oh, I don’t know, I just wanted to see how everything is.’ You say, ‘I am fine. How is your sister, Bliss, doing? Can she also come to chat for a while?’ And Sadness says, “She wanted to come but got tied up for an hour or so and sent me to keep you company. We just wanted to make sure you were all right. We are identical twins. We both love you very much.’ You say, ‘All right then, I love you both, too. You can visit me any time.’

“The point of this illustration is that you accept both sadness and bliss as one with no division; both are perfectly good. You don’t choose. Accept sadness, and you suddenly feel harmony. The two opposites in you will not be there to fight anymore. Instead, they will meet and melt into

one. It is not that sadness causes you pain. Rather, the interpretation that sadness is wrong and, thus, must be rejected causes you pain. The same applies, let's say, to anger. It is not anger that is distressing. It is the interpretation that anger is wrong. However, anger and its opposite, delight, are identical twins; they are two sides of the same coin. Once you drop the division, the opposites will be absorbed by your being; you will be cool, content, and happy. Life is a kinship of opposites, a profound harmony."

Greg looked at the watch. "I think you now have enough information to work with. Do you have any questions before we wrap up our session?"

"Well, I have found your discourse quite informative. Thanks. Now, I know much more about how to handle my loneliness and will apply your advice immediately," Harry replied.

"It will take some time for a paradigm shift to take place, so be patient with yourself. I will see you again in a week to continue our sessions," Greg said, concluding their first session.

LIVING BOREDOM BEHIND

The subject of the next session was how to tackle boredom.

Harry described the problem, “Often I feel bored, looking for something to do to pass the time. While at work, I don’t feel bored because I am busy with projects and meetings all day long. But when I come home, I don’t know what to do. Even with my girlfriend, we usually go out to avoid boredom. We go out to restaurants, movies, and parties, drive to Manhattan, visit museums and galleries, or just wander around. When we are at home, we watch TV, but that becomes boring after a while. Of course, we have sex, but there’s only so much sex you can have. So my question is, How can I not be bored with life?”

“Boredom is a twin brother of loneliness—it is a significant problem for man,” Greg began.

Greg nodded to himself and continued, “Boredom means a state of being bored and not knowing what to do with one’s available time or life in general. As you said, it usually comes up during idle times. Everybody seems to suffer from it. And this is why everybody constantly looks for entertainment and events that can excite the mind to fill that void inside and raise one’s emotions. Many use drugs to deal with boredom. Chemicals transport them into an alternate reality to forget about boredom for a while. But then, the boredom inevitably comes back.

“Look around. You can see how people engage in meaningless activities. Shopping is the most popular one. They buy stuff they don’t need but get a thrill from it and don’t feel as bored. Shopping is an addiction, just a milder drug than heroin. Millions are shopaholics.

“Another popular way to deal with boredom, and loneliness for that matter, are pets. Seventy percent of American households own a dog, cat, or both. Many own a few dogs and cats. Pet owners consider their pets to be family members. Having pets is perfectly fine as long you enjoy caring for them. But does having a pet really solve the boredom and loneliness problem? What do you think, Harry?”

“Well, I think to a certain extent, pets help you forget about boredom and loneliness, but the price the pet owners pay is that they depend on the pet for their emotional well-being. That is why dogs are called therapy dogs nowadays,” Harry answered.

“Precisely. What about a football game? Almost everyone watches football. Many people dedicate time to learning every detail about their favorite players’ lives. People get together to watch the game—beer, popcorn, quite an emotional evening, like a ritual. Going to the stadium is a major event. If the team wins, it is a big deal, and a big celebration ensues, coming with a good mood and big parades. People drive around with their team’s flags on their cars. Indeed, to millions, football is a big deal. If the team loses, it is a source of great sadness, frustration, regret, and depression.

“The young generation indulges in texting and getting as many followers as possible on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social networks. They brag about how many so-called

‘friends’ they have. Unfortunately, social networking is just another addiction to dealing with boredom.

“These are just a few examples of popular activities to avoid boredom. They are all external devices that provide temporary relief. They are like Tylenol to temporarily remove the pain, but they are not a permanent cure. Boredom goes nowhere.

“Man lives in boredom, bored to death. Look at people’s faces. It seems as if they carry a cross on their backs—bored, with no meaning in life. Everyone is preoccupied with survival. Even if they smile or laugh, it is a ‘say cheese’ kind of phony smile for the most part. Underneath is always sadness, boredom, and no celebration of life.

“And it is not so bad for the younger people. They have jobs and careers, and at least ten hours a day every day, they are busy at work, so they have no time to feel bored. It is different for the older folks who are over sixty-five and retired. They have about twenty years to go with not much to do. Of course, the typical pastime is fishing, going out, socializing with the family, sitting on the porch, watching TV, playing golf, playing with grandchildren, and traveling to foreign countries occasionally. Watching TV is their primary pastime. But isn’t it rather a monotonous existence? There’s only so much fishing, golfing, and watching CNN one can do.

*Trifles and dainties attract the passing people,
while the Tao goes unnoticed.
When looked at, it is not much to see;
when listened for, it can scarcely be heard;
but when put into practice, it is inexhaustible.
The world will go to those who seek the Tao;
they will find contentment, peace, and rest.*
- Lao Tzu

“Indeed, boredom is one of the most critical aspects of human life. We are bored, and whatever we do will result in even more boredom. Awareness of boredom means that the futility of life has become evident to you. You are running on the constant wheel of repetition like a merry-go-round. You have done all those activities before, but boredom is still there; nothing changes. Boredom is the first clue that insight arises in you about life's meaninglessness. There are two ways you can respond to boredom. One way is to avoid it, escape from it, ignore it, do endless things that occupy you, and take you from the realities of life. But can you escape? No, you can only avoid it for a while. The more you try to escape, the more it will return. You can run into a thousand things, but the boredom will return.

“Boredom is not something that can be avoided. Instead, it has to be faced. You have to become aware of it. The first step is, like in loneliness, accepting it as a normal part of life. Just like fish, we are surrounded by an ocean of boredom. We swim in it. Feeling bored is normal.

“Be bored, but don’t try to escape from it. Become a witness to it. Look at it as if it is a separate entity. Keep on witnessing the boredom, and soon, you will discover your inner emptiness that

lies underneath boredom. Boredom is just a disguise of inner emptiness. Escaping boredom is escaping your emptiness, your black hole. Becoming aware of your inner emptiness is the moment of your salvation, and it takes courage to admit your inner emptiness and nothingness. It is scary, but it needs to be done for your own sake. Once you reach that point in your development, you can start the salvation process. The turning point in your life is the courage to look inside at your inner void, your inner black hole.”

“Are there people who never feel bored?” Harry asked.

“Well, let’s see. You say that you go to art museums in Manhattan. When you visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, you are surrounded by thousands of art masterpieces by Rembrandt, Goya, Caravaggio, Rubens, Velazquez, and El Greco, to name a few. Those were men of incredible talent and creativity. They worked every day on those masterpieces. Creating monumental art takes talent, dedication, and stamina. They spent grueling hours every day in seclusion in their studios. When we look at those paintings, we hardly think about how they were created or what was going on behind the scenes.

“Creating a painting is a long process. It is not that the artist takes brushes, puts colors on canvas, and voila, a masterpiece is born. No, it does not work that way. They had some initial, vague image of the finished painting in their head and then drew hundreds of sketches in pencil and color. They painted separate scenes using models. And even after doing all the preliminary work, they still made many changes to the final canvas before finishing the painting. Some paintings took months or even years to complete. Being a creative artist is hard work.”

“Do you think those old masters had problems with boredom?” Greg asked.

“From what you have described, I don’t think they had a boredom problem. They were absorbed in their creativity their whole life. It gave them meaning and fulfilled them; they did not have time to be bored,” Harry answered.

“Exactly! Creativity is the only panacea for boredom. Creativity is the only thing that can fill that void inside of you. Without creativity, life is meaningless and boring. True creativity is a complex subject. It would be impossible to understand creativity without first clearly understanding that creativity comes from the person's inner world and is never the result of outer activities. Spending a half-day in the shopping mall out of boredom will not produce the Mona Lisa, the Sistine Chapel, or the theory of relativity.

“When the artist creates, that artist may disappear into the art; he is no longer separate from the painting. He becomes a conduit for the universal energy; he becomes one with the Tao, one with existence. He plugs into a spiritual plane of existence. He is possessed by some invisible force that he cannot explain. Something mysterious takes over; something from the beyond moves his brush and puts the correct paint combinations on the canvas, giving him the right thoughts. He feels as if he is connected with some other dimension that uses him as a tool to create. An energy channel opens up. He feels that he is not doing it, but existence is doing it through him. The artist disappears. This has been the experience of all great artists: the feeling of being possessed. This mystic experience is a genuine phenomenon that may happen to anyone.

“The same applies to any creativity, be it composing music, writing a song, writing a book, sculpting, playing musical instruments, discovering new laws of physics, gardening, cooking, and so forth.

“Creativity is the attitude that you have for whatever you do. It is how you look at things. In creativity, you love what you do. It does not matter that nobody knows about it. Nobody will publish articles with your picture in newspapers. The only thing that matters is that you enjoyed it; it has intrinsic value.

*It is the Mystery of Life itself.
It is the essence of all things,
And your essence as well.
Somewhere deep inside
You already know all this.
- Lao Tzu*

“To completely dissolve boredom, you need to live a multidimensional life rather than a one-dimensional one. Let’s say you are an engineer, and perhaps, you think that is all for you in this life; you identify with your profession and skills as an engineer. Your whole life, you will be just an engineer, traveling only on one highway and never taking an exit to try other highways. After a while, you become bored - the same routine day after day, year after year. Monotony sets in. So try to find additional creative interests in life that may excite you. Play guitar, explore photography, paint, or write books and articles, for example. Try many other creative things, and you will never be bored again. What other talents and desires do you think you may have?”

“I recall when I look at paintings that I sometimes picture myself as an artist. When, let’s say, I look at Rubens’ paintings, I think about how I would feel if I were him. My engineering mind analyzes the composition and why the artist decided to depict the scene a certain way. I often use an electronic guide or download an app to learn more about paintings and artists when walking around the museum. One of my favorite Rubens paintings is *The Wolf and Fox Hunt*, where he depicts a hunting scene with wolves and foxes. It shows walking hunters and hunters on horses battling two wolves and three foxes. It is very life-like; you almost feel like one of the hunters in the scene. I like art and think I would enjoy painting in my spare time,” Harry commented.

“Painting is an excellent choice for a hobby, Harry. We found something to keep your boredom at bay. Take some art classes to learn how to use the tools and techniques. You would need to buy an easel, paints, brushes, canvases, sketchbooks, pencils, and other tools and set up a studio. Also, I recommend you buy some books on painting and about artists.

“Because you are an engineer and think in terms of projects, tasks, and assignments, I suggest you look at the process of painting as having projects. Each painting that you will create would be a separate project. The composition, canvas size, color combination, techniques, and how fast you want to complete the painting would sync with your mentality of handling projects; the approach would be familiar to you. It would be similar to creating a new medical device—you would be creating a ‘new medical device’ with painting.

“And when you finally enter your retirement age, you could keep going on with creative projects, never stopping. Who knows, down the road, you may decide that writing novels or nonfiction pieces are more appealing to you. There is no end to creativity. There is no need to divide life into ‘preretirement’ and ‘retirement’ phases, as in conventional thinking. I suggest ignoring that ‘sixty-five’ stop sign and keep going. Always remember that age is just a number. Ignore that number. How you feel is what counts. Whether you are sixty-five or 150, who cares? If you can paint a painting, write a novel, or chop wood at 150, you are good to go. Just make sure you put in enough effort to maintain good health. In fact, by continually exercising your brain, you will increase your chances of delaying or even avoiding the typical brain disorders most older adults suffer from. In other words, being *active* in our ‘golden years’ is essential to our well-being. And there are a thousand ways to ensure good health.

“There’s no need to reduce life to the mundane, boring existence expected of retirees. It would be a remarkable achievement if your heart finally stopped at age 150 while you were moving a brush on the canvas, creating another masterpiece. But you may ask, Is it possible to live to 150? I think so. But longevity is a big, fascinating subject in and of itself, and we may discuss it if you want in our future sessions.

“To fulfill our destiny, we need to have an independent mind to think and act according to one’s inner inclinations, not that of the crowd. Believing in yourself and believing that you are unique should be a natural conviction. There is no other like you.”

At this point, their session came to an end. They agreed to meet the following week again to continue exploring the vastness of the Tao.

Harry left Greg’s study satisfied with their session on boredom. *Creativity is the key. Now, the quality of my life should improve. Thanks to Greg, I know now what to do about loneliness and boredom, the two main culprits for stopping my happiness.*