

The Trip

By Max Gaenslen
ITP Mastery Teacher and ITP San Francisco Co-leader

I awakened to my soul's purpose in this lifetime on a Greyhound bus, traveling between Ithaca, NY and Manhattan, in December of 2004. Suddenly my life's work became obvious to me. It felt like this purpose had been just sitting there, in plain sight but unnoticed, and upon recognition I suddenly became aware of a common thread between everything that had ever fascinated me: personal development, business, music, psychology, philosophy, spirituality, relationships.



I was (and still am) here to pursue the question of how one meets his or her potential. What is the difference between those who go out in the world and express the divine spark within them and those who feel frustrated and blocked? How do I help the latter become the former? It certainly hasn't been lost on me that I needed to be my own first client.

In the months and years following this epiphany, the ways in which my life reorganized itself around my vision seemed, at times, miraculous. Other times I encountered road blocks (which usually, if not always, ultimately wound up being internal), which threatened to derail my vision, tested my resolve and forced me to grow in order to move forward.

There is essentially no aspect of my life that isn't now in alignment with my vision. In moments when I'm stuck, if I'm able to quiet myself and engage in a deeper listening, this vision becomes my compass. "Deeper listening" is easier said than done. There are times in which some part of me doesn't want to listen, perhaps because authentically pursuing my vision means taking action that's way outside of my comfort zone, letting go of something I don't want to let go of or taking on something daunting. There have been times when I literally prayed to the universe to make my challenges go away (that my prayers were not explicitly answered proved an amazing, albeit unwanted, growth opportunity). My own prejudice is that the breakthrough and rebirth that comes from moving through challenges is a function of connecting to what is deeply true and authentic within us and moving out into the world from this place.

While my Greyhound bus experience was precipitated by feeling extremely stuck and frustrated, there are a myriad of ways, I've discovered, to deeply connect with ourselves, including that which is larger than us, and fortunately they don't all have to be unpleasant. Just a few off the top of my head include bracketing back the world and giving ourselves space to deeply listen to all aspects of our being: body, mind, heart, and soul; meditation; noticing what 'lights you up' and pursuing it; connecting with and listening to friends and trusted advisors who know us and can speak honestly; noticing and sharing

our feelings moment to moment; journaling; being in nature; enjoying being—and moving—in a body; deeply taking in art and noticing what it evokes in us; lastly, having fun!

I personally can't imagine this journey without an integral approach and community. Thank you ITP, I feel truly blessed.