



HOW MEDITATION TAUGHT AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

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I am hardly the stereotype for anything that might be considered woo-woo.

A graduate of Yale and Columbia, I am more Brooks Brothers than tie-dyed. I had a childhood where sitting was frowned upon when you could be up and about doing something more productive.

So the die was cast. All these influences, from parents to schooling, combined to teach me to think big. Once out in the world, I learn from others how to turn ideas into actions, and action into movements.

From all outward appearances at age 75, I was viewed as a “success” I had helped design and implement public service programs for 8 U.S. Presidents.



At the desk

My resume was filled with building ideas from the ground up into major programs affecting millions of lives. My career accomplishments stood out and, on the home front, my family and three children were thriving.



Sam Beard as Staff Associate to U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy. 1966

Then a personal crisis created debilitating stress. My life was turned upside down. The solution came in a form that was astoundingly simple and profoundly life-changing: Meditation.

The basic idea of using meditation to reach an elevated level of consciousness was certainly not new to me. A half-century earlier, I had read about calming the mind through meditation to connect to a higher energy. But every time I tried, I calmed my mind, and fell sound asleep. Since insomnia was never an issue for me, I didn't see much benefit and quit.

My curiosity about that mystical, spiritual and emotional dimension (to which meditation provides a gateway) persisted through the decades—no doubt dropping hints along the way that maybe I should do something about this deficit in life patterns. My whimsical mind found notions like reincarnation and past lives exotic and fascinating, but far afield from my lapsed Catholic upbringing.

I read up on therapies that used hypnotism to help patients pop into past lives and heal from traumas. Fifteen years ago, I even spent two days with a noted expert seeking to uncover possible past lives. Basically nothing worked. On the second day, I did get a flickering image of a Roman soldier with leather armor,



Sam and wife Joan in Mexico. 2006

a skirt, sandals and a sword like Kirk Douglas in the film *Spartacus*. This could have been an image of a past life, but I really concluded that my urge to have a successful outcome might have conjured it up.

I was also given some tapes to help relax the mind that in retrospect I'm glad I held onto. Years later when the onslaught of stress came full force, I took out those dusty tapes and used them to see if I could get some relief. The sonorous voice and relaxing music helped calm my nerves and allowed me to work productively three to four hours a day while wading through strident and toxic negotiations to resolve my situation.

As I became more experienced in these daily, one-hour meditation sessions, I found to my surprise an added bonus that I could also seek guidance to help restore my life. As I began listening to the intuitions I was receiving, I found that I had uncovered what is best described as my guardian angel.

Coincidentally (or maybe not), an old colleague who I had not seen in ten years, called and said he was coming to town. When we met up for coffee, I shared my crisis with him. To my surprise my friend was a global expert in the untapped powers of the mind and self-realization. Without hesitation, he virtually unlocked the door to a whole library of books and life-changing seminars. I devoured the list of books and began attending various seminars both home in the U.S. and abroad.

Within in a year, the lawyers had resolved my personal crisis. All the while many remarkable things started happening, many of which defy logical explanation.

It is safe to say that came in the wake of my crisis has been an unfolding adventure into the realm of human potential that has been more exciting than anything I've experienced in my life.



Sam Beard with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Bali. 2006

The exploration into my psyche was eye-opening. My priorities were backward.

Career, family, friends—instead of family, friends and career. I uncovered all types of personality flaws that had been tempered by my predominantly left-brain existence and career activism.



President George W. Bush appoints Sam Beard to be a member of the President's Social Security Reform Commission. 2001

The more I meditated, the more I learned and gradually began filling in the gaps. Our parents are our first teachers, but typical of their generation, they were hardly the hugging, touchy-feely types. So, to make up for that, I am learning much later in life how the longest and hardest (and the most rewarding) journey for me is the 18 inches from my brain to my heart.

I am becoming more adept on how to better love, empathize and connect with others, understand their minds and better listen to their priorities. In short, I am learning emotional intelligence.



Sam pictured with his daughter Morgan in 2016.

I greet each day with gratitude and excitement about newfound possibilities.

I want to do whatever I can to spread the word. This is my new life's work. The next big program I build will cut to the chase and will therefore be the most important one of all. With all that meditation has given to me, I know my best work lies ahead.

I am living proof that you can teach an old dog new tricks!



Wife Joan, Sam and daughter Morgan



In recognition of Sam's work on National Development Council (NDC) Economic Development Programs, four U.S. Presidents– Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan signed and gifted this picture to Sam.



Son Alex Beard and Family. (Left to Right: Wife Amy, Son Landry, Alex, Daughter Camille. 2016)