

Personal Transformation Help:

A Call to Magic

The Artful Science of
Transforming Self and World

Mitch Williams

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DEDICATION

To Richard Wayne Clark

1944—2012

Our artful and creative friend, who left us far too soon.

I just know you would have loved arguing about
the contents of this book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My profound gratitude and appreciation goes out to my editor, Marilyn Wilzbach, to George Catlin for writing the Foreword (and for coming up with the great title idea), and to my wife, Kathi, who inspires and enables me to be more than I am on a virtually daily basis.

Foreword

Magic has always fascinated me. I don't like to be fooled and think I'm clever enough to know when someone is pulling the proverbial wool over my eyes. Yet when I go to a magic show—including those of Mitch Williams—I am astounded that things are clearly happening before my eyes that are not at all possible.

It's wonderful to be so fascinated with life, with the unexpected, the seemingly impossible. And that's what this book is all about: the magic of living that we may not be noticing. Or practicing.

Mitch Williams has a message for us all. It's nicely summed up in an experience he recalls near the end of the book. It comes down to "open your eyes and change the world." But how? And is that possible? Who would dare to suggest that we could change this vast and troubled planet simply by opening our eyes? Maybe this isn't magic at all but a mere fantasy, an afternoon's entertainment but not the real philosopher's stone that will change this lead into gold.

That's the challenge of this book: Is it real? Can this man's story and all his insight possibly transform the world itself and our perception of it? I assure you, I would not be writing this *Foreword* if I were not convinced the answer is "yes."

Yes, Mitch Williams is a modern day magician, but to my eye he is also a practitioner of an equally ancient practice we associate more with the east, jnana yoga. This approach to yoga or union or realization is often characterized as the way of knowledge. But "knowledge" is a poor summation of the art of jnana yoga. It is more a process of transforming oneself through insight into the nature of consciousness.

This has been traditionally achieved through long years of meditation on such fundamental questions as "Who am I?" And "Who am I?" might be a good lens through which to view this book. It is one set of answers to this question, and I might add, an incredibly insightful set of answers drawn equally from Mitch's own life experience and his clear mastery of much of the best current teaching on the matter.

Mitch would claim that you and I are magicians also; that we are here to participate in his fairly unconventional view of magic as bringing illusion to reality. There are illusions all around us. That much is certainly clear, and every one of us does plenty to sustain their existence. As Mitch so rightly points out, the primary illusion presently plaguing our world is that of separation—that we're all here pretty much alone with the foremost responsibility being to take care of oneself. This is a belief based on plenty of experience, but is it reality? How would we know for sure?

Clear insight into the ways our minds work, or jnanayoga, is one means of answering this question, and most of this book provides just that. Page after page is filled with insight into the nature of our lives: observations of things we all do every day followed by suggestions for new ways of looking at it all.

Of course the reader still must do the work of asking him-or-herself if it's all true, what one actually believes. Mitch is well aware of this—continually posing questions and gently folding himself into the process he invites the reader to undertake. But the beauty of this book is that so much of it is so obviously well thought out that one can safely relax as if listening to a wise and trusted friend and let the ideas settle for a night or two. Then see how they look in the morning, and more importantly, see how the world looks.

We are all engaged in the age-old practice of seeing anew, paradoxically trying to develop fresh eyes, new ways of seeing that are undistorted by all our conditioning. To truly see the world as it actually is would be a wonderful thing. Sages have done so and their universal report is that it is beautiful beyond belief, that we are connected in ways we cannot imagine, and that love is the actual substance of being.

Obviously no one gets to all this in a single step. One book, one practice, one experience at a time we make our ways toward it. What is wonderful about this book is that we both experience much of the author's journey and have the opportunity to make real progress ourselves.

In many ways that is my favorite aspect of this book. What a privilege it is really get to know one other pilgrim on the path, one other serious human being who has applied himself to understanding the very steps most of us are trying to take. As we get to know Mitch, as we come to understand his magical perspective of

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transformation, we inevitably see ourselves and our world that much more clearly. And as we do this, we do, in fact, bring illusion to reality. Magic.

—George Catlin, Ph.D.
Author of *The Way to Happiness*.

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INTRODUCTION

I am a magician.

There are many ways we could interpret that. Yes, it's true, for most of my adult life, I've earned my living performing sleight of hand and other theatrical magic, both on stage and in more intimate situations.

But let's take a deeper look at what it means to be a "magician". A real magician would be someone who could envision an outcome in his or her imagination, and then elicit a corresponding transformation of *outer* reality. Of course, many would say that isn't possible. But wait a minute, we all know of people who can actually do this.

Martin Luther King "had a dream". He envisioned the world as it might be. Many said it wasn't possible. But his dream led to a radical transformation of *outer* reality. But in that sense, aren't we all magicians? Don't we all have the ability to envision an outcome, and transform outer circumstance based on that vision?

But, "Oh," the skeptic in us might reply, "that isn't magic. That's just life."

My point exactly.

That *is* life. And life is *magic*. All too easy to forget.

This is a book on a philosophy of "magic". It is a result of a lifetime of study, contemplation, and real life experience. The ideas I present here are ones that I have used successfully to help me lead a more fulfilling and inspired life. They have worked for me on many occasions in many ways that have allowed me to be more successful at what I do.

By "successful" I don't mean just in terms of financial or material success, though that has sometimes been the case. I mean that they have helped to bring a richness of joy, peace of mind, and love into my life in ways that I don't believe would have been possible without the understandings that these ideas represent. I offer them in the hope that they may have value for you as well.

In order for that to happen, however, it's important to understand that these ideas are not important in and of themselves. As mere ideas, they may be interesting at best. But their only true

value lies in their ability to help lead you to a personal *experience* of insight or awareness or enlightenment.

I offer this magical philosophy and the strategies herein not because I feel in any sense that I have mastered them, but in fact, because I have not. I still struggle daily to more consistently apply many of these principles in my life. It is my belief that by sharing them with you in this way I will further reinforce them for myself, learn more about them, and hopefully be better able to implement them more and more effectively, both for myself as well as for others with whom I interact.

I am both gladdened and humbled that you choose to spend time with me here and now. In your choice is magic born. For in your choice these lines of text upon this printed page take life. What sprang forth from my mind as a call to some seemingly unknown, unnamed soul, only to be concretized in these symbols of ink, now begins to take on meaning in your mind.

In your simple choice, a miracle manifests itself. For in this act of choice, of curiosity, of interest and attention, your mind and mine are joined in a moment of communion. A moment which transcends the gap of time and space and all that seems to lie between us. I say "seems" because that distance may not be so great at all in truth. That gulf that lies between your mind and mine may be naught but an illusion of misperception, as we shall see, if you continue to make this choice of spending time with me, and thus of leaving time itself behind.

If you choose to join me on this journey, I'd like very much to share my thoughts and dreams, and tell you of my world: a world of magic and wonder, of creation and mystery, of innocence and grace. But then, it is my belief that *all* our worlds are fashioned thus; that magic is all around us and permeates the very essence of all things seen and unseen, and we but choose to see it not. But we can always and ever choose again, in any moment.

What is your choice?

PART ONE

Magical Principles

Chapter One

THE POWER OF MYSTERY

*"The most beautiful thing we can experience is
the mysterious."*

—Albert Einstein

Did you ever wonder? My good friend and fellow professional magician, Andrew Dakota, is fond of asking that question. Did you ever *wonder*? The experience of wonder is something that can take us to another place entirely. It can bring about complete and radical transformations of our perceptions. It can take us out of the limitations of time-bound awareness and into the experience of the eternal Now. So, *did you ever wonder?*

Whenever we find ourselves in awe—of *anything*—whether it's the magnificence of nature, or a piece of art, or a performance that moves us, or even a magician on stage doing something that seems impossible, in that moment we leave behind our normal concerns and worries and all of our limited perceptions of ourselves and our everyday world, and we have an experience of pure inspiration—*inspiratus*—being "in the spirit". The experience of awe or wonder is the true source of all inspiration and of all aspiration, of being motivated to reach beyond and rise above.

For as long as I can remember I've always had an innate need to understand how things work. I think it's one of the things that drew me to magic as a child; I wanted to unravel the mystery. It's also inspired a lifelong interest in science. Some of my earliest memories involved being outside, and simply watching ants move in and out of an ant hill, or examining the various plants in our yard, or watching the clouds move across the sky, or staring up at the stars at night. I'd be completely in awe of these things, and an hour would go by in what seemed like a moment.

And I wondered what made it happen.

It's also led me to increasingly bigger questions. One of the big mysteries with so much room for exploration is how people work.

Why do we do the things we do? Which, of course, led to an interest in a study of psychology and human behavior.

In addition to magic, one of my other early passions came when I was introduced to Judo and other martial arts. Since I had aspirations to excel; in Judo, at magic, and in other areas as well, I also became interested in the peak performance aspects of human behavior. As a young adult, I was invited to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado to train with the U.S. men's Judo team, where I experienced a variety of peak performers, in Judo and in other sports, first hand.

I became immersed in a study of various self-help literature and in certain aspects of transformative psychology. How is it that some people can achieve beyond the norm? What are the obstacles that prevent us from doing so? And how can we overcome those obstacles?

I've also continued to question—to wonder—about the even bigger mysteries. What does it all mean? How does it all fit together?

One point of intense curiosity for me has always been in finding apparent contradictions or paradoxes. In fact, I consistently find paradoxes to be some of the most fertile ground for exploration, discovery, and insight.

How is it that bumblebees shouldn't be able to fly, yet they do? Why is it that the less patience we have and the more we hurry, the longer everything takes? How can an atom be both a "wave of energy" and a "particle of matter"? How can it be that the way to discover who we really are as individuals comes from giving up the need to "be someone". In the words of musical artist Tracy Chapman, "Why are the missiles called peacekeepers when they're aimed to kill?" If God is infinite Love, how could He (She?) allow destruction and suffering? Magic itself is the paradoxical representation of both the great illusion, and infinite possibility.

It's in searching for resolutions to such apparent contradictions that we so often find meaning in life. It's certainly been fertile ground for me in my own exploration.

The other area of insight for me, perhaps paradoxically, is in finding the connections between things. This is so often an even bigger area of wonder and mystery. Seemingly unrelated aspects of life suddenly reveal themselves to be governed by the exact same principles.

An example of this in my own life came when I met Channing Pollock, a famous magician and movie actor who became a good friend and mentor. Through Channing's influence, I began to see that seemingly unrelated areas of my own life—my interests in magic and performing, artistic self-expression, psychology and peak performance, Judo and the martial arts, and Eastern philosophy, to name just a few—were really all interconnected aspects of my own unified sense of personal purpose.

There followed a period of time when serendipity, synchronicity, and what for me at the time were absolutely uncanny, often mind blowing and even seemingly magical coincidences became daily, regular events in my life. They became so common in fact that I eventually stopped being shocked by them and began to simply accept them as a natural phenomenon to be expected.

And of course the theme for me is and has always been magic. I do believe in magic. I believe the very essence and nature of life is magical. And we forget it at our peril. A life devoid of magic and wonder is to my mind little more than mere existing. There is magic all around us all the time, and the key is to simply remember to look for it.