



UNITY MAGAZINE

Iyanla
VANZANT

Teaches How to
GET OVER IT!

PERCEPTION ISSUE

The Inaugural New Thought Walden Awards:
LOOK WHO'S CHANGING THE WORLD

JOHN HOLLAND ON BRIDGING TWO REALMS
ERIC BUTTERWORTH ON BEING LOVE

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LISTENING
IN WITH ...

Iyanla VANZANT

The Power of PERSPECTIVE

İYANLA VANZANT KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE. COMING FROM A BACKGROUND THAT INCLUDED ABUSE AND VIOLENCE, SHE EARNED A LAW DEGREE ON HER WAY TO BECOMING A POPULAR SPIRITUAL LIFE COACH AND INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER KNOWN FOR

HER HUMOR AND STRAIGHT-SHOOTING STYLE. SHE'S HOSTED A HANDFUL OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS (ONE OF WHICH WON AN EMMY) AND HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL BEST-SELLING BOOKS, ALL DESIGNED TO TEACH OTHERS HOW TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES TOO. ONE POTENT KEY, SHE SAYS IN HER MOST RECENT

BOOK, *GET OVER IT!* (HAY HOUSE, 2018), IS SHIFTING NEGATIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS. HERE, VANZANT TALKS TO *UNITY* MAGAZINE EDITOR **KATY KOONTZ** ABOUT HOW SHE DISCOVERED UNITY, EMBRACED HER TRUE CALLING, AND DEVELOPED A HEALING PRACTICE SHE CALLS THOUGHT THERAPY.



Katy Koontz: You grew up in a Pentecostal church. How did you find New Thought?

Iyanla Vanzant: I was in a bookstore in New York City, and I got hit in the head with *This Thing Called You* by Ernest Holmes.

KK: It just fell off the shelf?

IV: Yes, so I began to investigate. I read *Spiritual Economics* by Unity minister Eric Butterworth and went to his lectures at Avery Fisher Hall in New York, where I learned about Charles Fillmore and other teachers. I vibrated more toward Unity than Religious Science at first because it had more references to the Bible.

KK: If you came from a Pentecostal background, how did this attract you?

IV: Yoruba (an ethnic group mostly in Nigeria) is my matriarchal lineage, so I was raised understanding my relationship to the Creator. The grandmother I grew up with, my father's mother who took me to the Pentecostal church, was Native American. She never let her culture go but she hid it because it wasn't acceptable in the church to talk about Father/Mother God or to recognize Mother Earth or nature spirits. It certainly wasn't acceptable to do anything African.

As soon as I turned 16 or 17, and no one could force me to go to church anymore, I stopped going. I always knew that wasn't how I wanted to engage with God. African culture and Native American culture don't think in terms of religion. Their spirituality is incorporated into everyday living.

When I bumped into New Thought, those teachings aligned with what I knew as a Native American and

felt as an African. I found in Unity a philosophy that made sense to me as opposed to being taught I was going to hell for everything, even for eating chicken the wrong way.

KK: You were already a Yoruba priestess by the time you became a New Thought minister, right?

IV: Right. When you're raised Yoruba, the elder council speaks into your life, into your soul, and into your spirit. It was always known that I would be a healer. So I went to nursing school ... for one day.

KK: One day?

IV: I saw a fetal pig in a jar and asked, "Is there going to come a time when me and that pig have to be introduced to one another?" They told me yes, and I never went back. Dissecting a frog was bad enough. I could not dissect a pig.

KK: *Iyanla* means "great mother." Was that chosen for you?

IV: Yes. Both traditional African and Native American cultures believe that your name is your nature—it speaks to the mission, purpose, or energy of your spirit. So people are named to highlight, call forward, support, and encourage their soul's purpose and mission. When I was initiated as a Yoruba priestess 35 years ago, they changed my name. Mothers are the first teachers we have, and mothers nurture, beautify, support, and affirm. From a broader perspective that's exactly what I do in my work.

KK: I've read that you are clairaudient but I haven't heard you talk about it much. Have you always been clairaudient?

IV: Yes, as a young child, I would speak what I heard clairaudiently—I could hear what was not said but was thought or felt—and it got me in *a lot* of trouble. I also had very vivid dreams and told everybody about them. Whatever I dreamt would happen within days. My grandmother decided I was evil, I was the devil.

KK: The same grandmother who was Native American?

IV: Yes, because I would speak about those things to anybody, and rather than teach me how to monitor that gift and set appropriate boundaries for it, she decided it was better to dismiss it altogether. I eventually learned how to present it and how to monitor it, and now I use it in my work. It's part of who I am.

KK: In your latest book, *Get Over It!*, you say that when we learn to change our dominant negative thought patterns, we change our lives. No matter how tempting it may be to feel victimized, blaming other people or circumstances, all we really have to do is shift our perspective.

IV: Absolutely. If it's in your world, it's there either by conscious, unconscious, or energetic invitation. *Conscious* invitation means that you actually thought it and called it in. *Unconscious* invitation means that you're thinking it but you don't know you're thinking it. And *energetic* invitation means that what you think and how you think creates a vibrational energy around you that calls things to you. So many of us are totally unaware of our dominant negative thought patterns because they are unconscious. We don't realize what we're inviting to us.



Everything that's happening *to* us is happening *through* us. When somebody says or does something that causes you to react, you want to make it about what they did and not about the trigger within you or what you're telling yourself unconsciously.

KK: Is that because we don't want to deal with our own shadow?

IV: Most people don't even know they have a shadow. They're not even thinking at the higher level. I think it's because we have a very limited emotional vocabulary. We have the thought, and it generates the feeling. Or we have a feeling, and it generates a thought, and it's good/bad, right/wrong, fair/unfair, or happy/sad. If you focus on what you're thinking for 20 minutes, you would be horrified at the minutia that passes through your brain. We have 60,000 to 70,000 thoughts a day, and we're probably conscious of only 700.

KK: Why are so many of us resistant to shifting our perspective?

IV: Because it's frightening. We fear the unknown. We'll hold on to what's familiar even if it's strangling us.

KK: Sometimes just recognizing that helps you get free from it.

IV: After this past presidential election, people were depressed, taking time off work, and weeping in the streets. I couldn't understand why hundreds of thousands of people were so intimidated by one person. Then other people were angry with those who were upset. *Okay, I thought, we've got to get over this.*

That's really when I could look at the dominant negative thought patterns that were coming to the surface. Our greatest fears had come upon us. I

could see the occupant of the White House as an absolutely accurate demonstration of who we are, of what we think, of how we behave.



PRAY, REPEAT AN AFFIRMATION, BELIEVE, AND THUMP YOUR THYMUS.

I looked at him and I thought to myself, *I've done that!* I've put other people down. I've judged other people based on my own limited perspective. I've said things and then when I get called on them, I've backpedaled and

sidestepped. I've attempted to get people on my side against somebody else. I've made people promise to be loyal to me. I've done all of the things that I'm looking at. That's why I recognize them.

So I realized that we have to get over looking at anything that's happening on the outside and instead start looking at what's happening on the inside, because *that's* what's manifesting.

KK: When you say, "Get over it," you're not being dismissive. You're talking about shifting the negative thought pattern.

IV: That's right. I'm teaching how to get over it using two age-old, time-honored principles: prayer and affirmation. Affirmative prayers are prayers of petition stated in an affirmative way because there's a level of confession in those prayers. They start out with the thought that, *This is what I feel*, or *This is where I'm stuck*, and then you use affirmations to move in to a higher level of divine mind where you are able to eliminate it. Sometimes when people pray, they beseech and beg and skirt the issue. But with Thought Therapy Prayer, you lay it out.

KK: The book outlines five such tools for bypassing the ego. With the second tool, thought therapy affirmations, you say we have to use some emotional muscle, saying the affirmation like we really mean it. Why is that emotional *oomph* so important?

IV: A belief is a thought fueled by emotion. When we think a thought over and over again, it eventually gets attached to an emotional image. That is what keeps it stuck in our being. And so it's important that when we speak an affirmation we use emotion so it really sticks. You have to trick

the ego because it's a ruthless little bugger, telling you, "This isn't true. You don't really believe that affirmation." Fortunately, it can't fight the energy of the truth.

Another tool is Thought Therapy Eye Movements, which reprogram the brain by creating new neural pathways. They stimulate and coordinate the brain's right and left hemispheres to receive and process new material. The complete directions are outlined in the book, but basically you do it by stretching your eyes in every possible direction.

I also teach the Thymus Thump, a tool based on the Emotional Freedom Technique, or tapping. The thymus gland is located behind the sternum, near the heart. It's directly connected to the lymphatic system, which is influenced by emotions, especially those related to feeling unsafe and attacked. Gently tapping on the thymus as you're speaking your affirmations clears stuck energy around these emotions that get in the way.

KK: Conscious breathwork is yet another tool you teach.

IV: Yes. So many of us think negatively because we're oxygen-deprived. We inhale and exhale, but most of us breathe high up in our chests. We don't fill our system with oxygen.

In conscious breathwork, you're focusing on the diaphragm and the full expansion and deflation of the lungs. This nurtures the brain as well as all the cells in the body. There's also a balancing breath where you're breathing in one nostril and exhaling through the other.

KK: Learning even just these five tools is very empowering.

IV: It really is. Without meaning to, we've trained ourselves to be

codependent—we think everybody else knows better than we do.

Therapists and coaches are a great support, and I'm not trying to take their work away, but I want people to know they don't have to be totally dependent on somebody else to help them through their difficulties. You can't run to the therapist every time something happens, but you can pray, repeat an affirmation, believe, and thump your thymus.

KK: I've heard you say that when you're truly living in trust and faith, what other people say and do doesn't make any difference.

IV: If one person tells you you're a horse, you can ignore them. That's their opinion or perhaps their projection. But if two people say it, then you want to check how you're walking. By the time three or four people tell you you're a horse, you need to take a look because you've got hay hanging out of your mouth. That's feedback from the universe. However, so many of us get caught on the one thing somebody said, and we're off to the races, demeaning and diminishing ourselves and being mad at the other person.

Similarly, comparing ourselves to other people is an act of self-violence. When you're looking at what somebody else is doing and then you think, *I'm doing it wrong because look at what they have and what I don't have*, that's violence to the spirit and to the soul because we each have different lessons to learn. Your A is my B. My D is your B, you know? We each have our own path, and we have to remember that and honor it.

KK: You also recommend the very potent practice of taking a pause when you're about to react to something upsetting so you have a chance to shift your perspective. That is not easy.

IV: Pauses are powerful. If we would just give ourselves permission to pause before we open our mouths or raise our hands or reach for the cookie, we'd have a lot more control in our life.

KK: What additional spiritual tools and techniques do you rely on?

IV: I'm an EFT practitioner, so I find that tapping on certain points in the body is helpful to move energy through the body. Of course, there's meditation—you need quiet time, silence. Balancing the body, whether with Reiki, tai chi, or some other practice, is also important. And for at least the past five years, the majority of music I listen to does not have words. I listen to certain artists, of course, but when I'm just playing music to create an environment, I play music without lyrics. I just want to feel the vibration of the instruments and the penetration of that energy.

I find some lyrics a little too dramatic. For example, "Ain't no sunshine when she's gone." Okay, wait a minute. The sun is still out, and I can still have sunshine. When I was growing up and my grandmother or the elders in my family told me, "You talk too much, you're bad, you're wrong," those words impressed upon me. Song lyrics can do that, too, so I want to be careful what words I choose to listen to. 🌍

Iyanla Vanzant is an Emmy Award-winning television host and *New York Times* best-selling author. Her current show, *Iyanla: Fix My Life*, is the No. 1 reality show on OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network. The latest of her 15 books is *Get Over It! Thought Therapy for Healing the Hard Stuff* (Hay House, 2018). Visit ianla.com.