

Book Swap & Share: The Surrender Experiment

Use the following prompts as a reading guide to help you digest the information presented in Michael Singer's "The Surrender Experiment" as you are reading. Feel free to skip questions or respond in any way you feel is appropriate as you are reading along.

Chapter 1 – Not with a shout, but with a whisper

"If the event is powerful enough to change the focus of your heart and mind, the rest of your life will change in due course (7)".

- ❖ Describe (at least one) a powerful event that may qualify as a truly life-changing event in your life. How did your interests & goals shift as a result? Can you envision this shift happening without the powerful event? Why or why not?

"For the first time in my life, my mind and emotions were something I was watching instead of being (8)".

- ❖ What does Singer mean by this statement? (Describe using your own words) Have you encountered yourself in observation of your sensations, thoughts & emotions? If so, what brought about this experience? How did it feel or how did you respond?
- ❖ What does it mean to really listen?
- ❖ What would it be like if "the voice" stopped? Has this ever happened, in your experience?

Chapter 2 – Getting to know me

"...who am I who keeps noticing all this mental activity? (11)".

- ❖ Share your thoughts & observations on this topic. Have you experienced—even if briefly—a sense of detached observation the way Singer describes? How did you feel? Has the experience changed anything?

Chapter 3 – The Pillars of Zen

- ❖ When this book ([Three Pillars of Zen](#) by Philip Kapleau) is recommended to Singer, it is exactly the perfect resource at the perfect time & state of his development. As you continue to read Singer's story, take note of all the examples he recounts of receiving exactly what is needed at exactly the right time:

| Event | Chapter | Who/What | Lesson Involved |
|---|------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Initiation into the world and method of meditation</i> | 3 | <i>Three Pillars of Zen (book)</i> | <i>Learned whole new "world" of meditation, book recommended to fit the bill, new way of life as a result</i> |
| <i>Etc...</i> | <i>...</i> | <i>...</i> | <i>...</i> |

- ❖ While doing your own personal development research, have you ever asked a question for which the most unexpected source provided a response? What was this experience like? Are there greater forces at work assisting our development?

"...just do the work necessary to quiet it down (15)".

- ❖ Do you have a regular meditation practice?
 - If yes, please jot down details that help you stay consistent & committed to your practice.

- If no, (or “not really”) have you attempted to meditate before? What prevents you from meditating on a regular basis? What benefits could you receive from maintaining a meditation practice?

Chapter 4 – Absolute Silence

“I was only aware of the effortless flow of warm energy that was building and expanding at the core of my belly. I was not there; only the flow was there (18)”.

- ❖ What does this description suggest about the nature of consciousness? Where does consciousness exist within the body? Is it limited to the brain alone? Explain.

“I now felt a very beautiful flow of energy up my spine to the middle of my forehead. I had never experienced this before, and almost all my awareness was drawn to that point (20)”.

- ❖ What do you suppose this energy is that Singer describes?

Chapter 5 – From Absolute Peace to Absolute Turmoil

“...I could not relate to the life I was coming back to. I had changed completely... (22)”.

- ❖ Before reading the remainder of this chapter, what predictions do you have about the way in which a transformation of this kind could affect personal relationships & living conditions?
- ❖ How would you rate the difficulty level of staying committed to self-improvement in the face of shifting relationships with others?

“My ‘normal’ way of being was gone. In one fell swoop, who I had been—was no more (25)”.

- ❖ Some people use the term “blessing in disguise” for situations such as these. Discuss what the term means for you & if you’ve ever experienced a similar situation or turning point in your personal history.

Chapter 6 – South of the Border

- ❖ Have you heard of someone receiving signs such as the ones Singer describes that inspired a decision like going to Mexico? Has anything similar happened to you? How would you recognise if these signs had a message for you to follow? What can you do to keep track of or help these signs stand out more clearly to receive these messages?

“Esta leche es de mi mama para el Americano en la colina (28)”.

- ❖ What does this reveal about the weeks Singer spend on the grassy hill? Can you recall being at the mercy of an act of kindness in your lifetime or hearing of something similar? Would this be another example of Singer receiving exactly what he needed at the right time on his journey? Why or why not?

Chapter 7 – Disconnecting the Panic Button

“This experience was so beautiful, and I would have missed it if I had listened to my scared self (31)”.

- ❖ Do you listen to your “scared self” as Singer describes? Have you been in a situation where letting go seemed to create a bizarre yet enjoyable experience? Explain.

“I remember thanking life that night for such a special day (32)”.

- ❖ Do you have a regular gratitude practice? Why or why not? What steps could you take to incorporate a regular (or more consistent) practice of gratitude in your life?

“...and then I rode like the wind across an expansive field (33)”.

- ❖ Explain the symbolism & its significance to Singer's journey thus far captivated in this single action.

Chapter 8 – Unexpected Inspiration

"Learning to embrace life as it unfolded around me was new to me, and the results had been very freeing (34)".

- ❖ Is this a new concept for you too? What struggles do you foresee for yourself in letting go to embrace life as it flows? What advantages do you foresee?

"I would eventually learn that everything in life has something to teach you and that it is all for your growth (34)".

- ❖ What are your feeling on this concept? Can you describe an example of an unexpected lesson that showed up in your life?

"It was more of a feeling, just a definite knowing that I now knew where the paper was going and how to get there (36)."

- ❖ Singer describes his first epiphany or what is sometimes referred to as an instantaneous download experience. Explain how the self-improvement work that Singer has done up to this point enabled the event to occur. What helped open this door? Have you heard of anyone else describing a similar experience? Have you ever had an experience like this?

Chapter 9 – The Promised Land

"Before contacting the owner, I picked a maximum number that I was willing to pay for the ten acres. The number was significantly less than the asking price, but I told myself that if the seller wouldn't come down to my price, it wasn't meant to be (39)".

- ❖ Singer describes that it was his sense of detachment that was key in helping him negotiate the ten acres. Do you feel his conclusion is accurate? Why or why not?

Chapter 10 – Building a Sacred Hut

"It was a real back-to-the-earth feeling watching the actual trees being turned into the backbone of your house (42)".

- ❖ Where else in his story does Singer connect with nature & the natural "backbone" supporting him & his lifestyle?

"Somehow, deeply touching experiences kept coming from the most unexpected places. It was really starting to blow me away (43)".

- ❖ Fear & perception play a large role in our interactions with our community members. Describe why Singer's interactions with people have been turning up as unexpectedly pleasant situations. Whose perception has shifted, exactly? In what way would you say Singer's relationships have changed since his awakening?

Chapter 11 – Get Thee to a Monastery

"My intention was to give up everything possible that pulled my attention outward. This would allow me to more fully focus on the deeper inner issues (46)".

- ❖ Singer began testing his "edge"; how far he can go past a tolerable comfort zone. In yoga, testing one's "edge" can indicate stretching farther in a posture, or it can indicate a whole lot more. Describe ways in which you may have tested your "edge", or willingly moved out of your regular comfort zone. What was the result?

Chapter 12 – When the Disciple is Ready, the Master Appears

"I was just starting to realize that I couldn't walk the path alone—I needed some help (50)".

- ❖ Often we have difficulty asking for help from others in situations where we could most benefit from another's aid. Describe a situation where you had been reluctant to ask for help, but once you did, the situation changed. What lessons are associated with this event?

Section II – The Great Experiment Begins

- ❖ For at least three consecutive days, try changing your inner narrative in the way Singer exemplifies in chapter 13. Try it out with the weather, or expand into other areas of your experience as you see fit. Keep a log of your practice. What observations, if any, did you make? Was there anything challenging you in this practice? Did anything in your outlook begin to change? Why or why not?

"That voice I was watching was not my spiritual adviser; it was my spiritual burden (58)".

- ❖ Explain how Singer has exemplified a new shift in his perception & ultimately his journey at this point. *"I began to see my entire relationship with Alan as another one of life's magical gifts, despite my initial resistance (59-60)".*
- ❖ How might this relationship have been different if Singer had agreed to the initial offer of payment for his tutoring services? Do you feel that the offer had been a way for the universe to test Singer's resolve of surrender? Explain.

"When I received notice back from the university, the administration had mistakenly signed me up for all three exams (60)".

- ❖ Do you feel Singer's use of the word "mistakenly" is correct in this case? What else may have been a factor in his having been registered for all three instead of only two exams? Explain.

"Three of the questions were exactly about the three places where I had arbitrarily opened the book the day before (61)".

- ❖ In efforts to divine information & develop intuition, some people practice opening books to an arbitrary passage on a regular basis. For the next few days, try doing so at random intervals throughout the day—at home, work, shopping, etc. Keep a log of your experiences. What observations did you make? Did this practice shed light on any ongoing issues or questions?
- ❖ What do you make of Singer's having received two letters regarding the Kriya yoga method? Was this a clear sign about his next direction or simply a coincidence? Why or why not?

"How could these two perfectly intertwined letters end up in my mailbox at the same time? (64)".

- ❖ Describe a time in your life when one door disappointingly closed while an unexpected door simultaneously opened. How did you react? Was there a sense of surrender to life's events?
- ❖ Have you or someone you know experienced a life-altering dream? Was the message clear or did it require some decoding? Describe the circumstances surrounding this message or change.
- ❖ How do you feel about Singer's reaction to Sandy's decision to build her house? What would you do in this situation?

- ❖ Singer began to feel more powerful meditations occurring in a group than the ones he was doing in solitude. What might be about to change for Singer at this point? What might be causing this new intensity?

Section III – From Solitude to Service

- ❖ If you were to design a temple, what would it be like? Where might you have it built?
- ❖ Summarize the events that led from Singer's place of solitude to a family and temple. Why was it a necessary part of Singer's transformation into servitude?

Section IV – The Business of Surrender

- ❖ Do you approach tasks in the way Singer describes each one being given by the universe itself? What would change if you began approaching work in this way? Who would be affected & in what way?
- ❖ What do you make of the Jim Owens story? Share your thoughts on the concept of what goes around, comes around. How likely is it that a bank president would leave his job to pursue an entrepreneurship & not be granted a bank business loan?

"Yet the sincerity of his spiritual practices had just attracted one of the higher beings on the planet into that dark hole (125)".

- ❖ Share your reaction to the David Clark story. What other images or references came to mind while reading this recount?

Section V – Something Priceless is Born

- ❖ Singer describes that he spoke the same language as the computer as if he were speaking to a human. Describe how his years of yoga postures & meditation practice may have led to this ability.

Section VI – The Forces of Natural Growth

"As it turned out, the years of spiritual work I had done to quiet that voice in my head had opened the door for almost constant inspiration (150)".

- ❖ Would it make sense for businesses to endorse a meditation practice for employees to follow? Explain.

Sections VII through IX

- ❖ What might have been different about Singer's Medical Manager Program & distribution of the software had he been profit-driven or seeking recognition for his invention?

(Brown rice and fresh vegetables)

- ❖ Have you ever been granted the opportunity to personally meet someone in this way or something similar? What was it like? How were you changed by these events?

"So God called you one day and said, 'Mickey, your house is ready' (170)".

- ❖ Describe how this event differs from the present-day practice of vision boards or list-making. Who designed this house for Mickey? What does this indicate about the difference between attributing an outcome to ego-centric desires & attributing an outcome to synchronicity or divine timing?
- ❖ Why do you suppose Singer chose to focus so strongly on the business side of his life in the latter portion of the book? What about his family life? Temple life? Explain your thoughts.

- ❖ Why do you suppose Singer spent the last section describing the details of the charges & trial? Do these chapters seem to jive with the rest of the book? Why or why not? Does this final section reveal something about Singer's true motivation for writing this book? Explain.