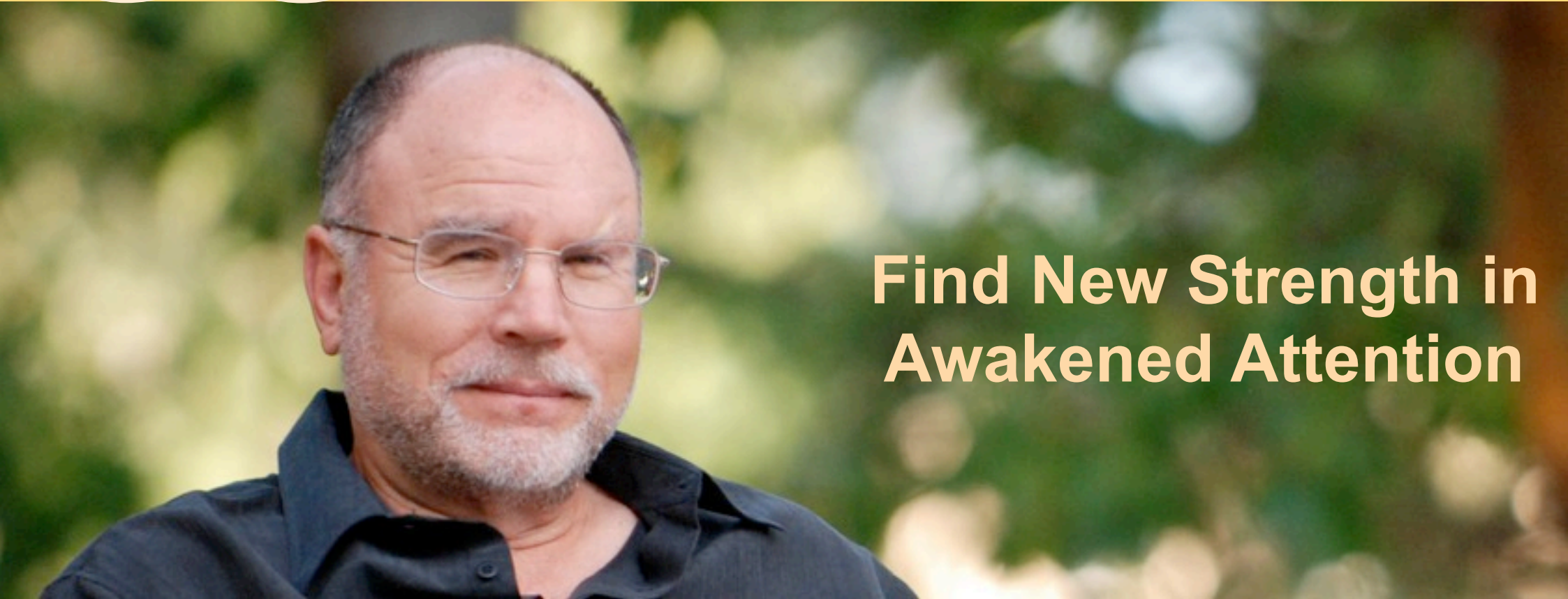




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# GUY FINLEY



## Find New Strength in Awakened Attention

Imagine for a moment a man walking through his office when his boss passes by and gives him a blank look. Suddenly the thought pops into the man's mind that his boss is criticizing him or doesn't like him. Now, as he starts to fear this idea a negative picture is produced by his imagination. His mind focuses its attention on this disturbing image. And the more he attends to this dark dream, the further into its labyrinth he descends, strengthening its presence and power to further frighten him. A heartbeat later,

he has no doubt: the boss has it in for him! This thought grows in authority for him, tormenting him for the rest of the day and causing him to snap at his family when he gets home. And all of this suffering is born of what? The conjunction of a passing glance and a moment of misdirected attention!

Here's the amazing thing about this illustration, and what we want to learn from it: this whole drama has been played out inside of the man –

storyline, stage, cast, and leading characters. But he doesn't see how this painful state is self-created; instead he believes it has been cast upon him by someone else – his heartless boss! So, what else can he do – being in the dark as he is to his true condition – but try to rid himself of his stressed feelings? How? By arguing with his boss, either outwardly or in his mind. The more he feels punished by the situation *that he sees in his mind*, the more he wants to fight with it. He's sure his unwanted experience exists

independent of his perception of it, but we can see he's mistaken. His pain is a product of how he sees the event and then all of the misery that comes with resisting his own mistaken perception. He is quite literally lashing himself, and the more he resists what he thinks is happening, the more it happens to him! This is a good description of what I call the "circle of self." In it we can see how the pain of our own mistaken perception produces the enemies it needs to keep itself alive.

From our vantage point, we can see how the man's unattended mind first animated a fearful thought, which leads to wrongly feeding it with his own life. We can also see that nothing can change for him until he sees the truth behind his trouble and withdraws his consent from it.

We suffer because we consort with painful thoughts and feelings, thinking somehow that

not wanting them makes them go away. But our unconscious actions betray us: first, by animating what makes us ache, and then by binding us to that relationship through our resistance to it. Here's a simple way of saying these last few ideas: *Not wanting our negative states actually nourishes them!* I can almost hear the question that comes next: "Wait a minute! You can't be saying these dark thoughts and feelings are good, and that we should want what's hurting us, are you?"

Of course not! Negative states have no right to exist in us as they presently do. And that's just the point. We literally give them a place to live in our psychic system – feed them, as it were – by trying to rid ourselves of them in the usual ways. But there are other ways of dealing with pervasive dark states besides resisting them, suppressing them, or trying to change the conditions seen as being responsible for them. *Instead of these acts of willfulness, we choose in favor of watchfulness.* Rather than struggling with dark states, learning to be quietly watchful of them does two things at once: first, it separates us from being wrongly identified with our own thoughts about that troublesome state. Second – by the light of our newly liberated attention – we catch a glimpse of a powerful insight whose light helps set us free:

If we mistakenly give any negative state its "life" – then the opposite must hold true: we can consciously withdraw that same life any time we so choose!

Here is a simple exercise to help you get started with this new kind of seeing that is the power behind freeing you. Several times each day, whenever you can remember to do it, deliberately disconnect yourself from your own



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thinking. Choose awareness of your thoughts over being absorbed in the sensations they produce as they carry you along to get what they want. The aim here is simple: reclaim your attention in order *to be where you are*, and then just quietly notice all that you can about yourself. The light of this new order of awareness empowers you to catch and release what your own unattended thoughts had been busy cooking up for you, using you as stock! Each time you remember to reclaim your attention in this manner, with it you regain your life. And here is a bright bit of encouragement to help you get started. The words that follow are those of Simone Weil, a brilliant French writer, activist, and lover of the Light: "Even if our efforts of attention seem for years to be producing no result, one day a light that is in exact proportion to them will flood the soul." ###

(Based on material from *The Essential Laws of Fearless Living*, by Guy Finley)

**Affirmations for Living Fearlessly**

Blame does not work. Any solution based in blame only postpones the inevitable moment when I will have to blame again. There is nothing to blame for why I feel as I do outside of what I have yet to understand about myself.  
*(The Lost Secrets of Prayer)*

**Guy Finley**

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