

The New Age

The New Age movement is made up of a wide range of spiritual belief systems which at their core hold the belief that, through mystic and occult practices, humanity can all become one with each other and can usher in a utopian society of peace on earth.

The Characteristics of the New Age

The New Age is not a religion with an official founder, leaders, or orthodox belief system. It is a diverse blend of all the ancient religions that are embraced to different degrees by each individual. However, there are common characteristics that make up New Age beliefs.

The New Age is non-doctrinal and advocates a tolerance towards all faiths as equally valid. New Age adherents believe that all religions are the same and people can determine their own truth and morality. They also seek to unite science and spirituality.

They believe that all people are connected to each other and the universe as a whole. There is a universal spirit, energy, or force that flows through everything and connects everything. Most people are ignorant of this reality.

Self-realization and discovery of one's true self are the goals to obtaining enlightenment. This leads to an awareness of one's oneness with the universe and all other humans.

Humans have the power through visualization techniques to manifest their own reality. They believe they can have self-healing, become wealthy, successful, etc.

There is an emphasis on self-healing through meditation and alternative medicine. They criticize mainstream Western medicine for simply attempting to cure diseases, holding to the belief that medical personnel should be seeking to cure the imbalance in the mind and body of the person through spiritual practices.

They believe in the ability to connect to the spiritual realm through mediums or channeling. They are contacting either benevolent spirit-beings who are interested in guiding humanity's spiritual development or dead relatives who are now spirit beings.

The movement leads all of humanity towards a utopian society called the New Age (Age of Aquarius) where everyone will live in peace and love one another under a universal religion and government.

Even though one may not meet many people who literally call themselves a member of the New Age Movement, the vast majority of Westerners have adopted New Age beliefs to a varying degree, whether they realize it or not. Most Westerners and people involved in the New Age Movement are completely ignorant of the history, development, and key figures in the New Age Movement. Though many different people have contributed to the development of and have embraced New Age beliefs throughout history, this paper will look at the key figures and their contribution to the New Age Movement.

The Mystic and Occult Influences

There are many influences in history that led to the birth of the New Age. The first were the mystics and occultists. Their ideas that humans can connect to the spiritual realm and even harness its powers are the basis for New Age beliefs.



Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) was a respected German doctor. Interested in mathematics and science; he studied medicine at the University of Vienna. It was there that he adopted the prevailing scientific view that a magnetic fluid flows through the universe and permeates all aspects of life. Mesmer believed that all planets and all life forms were interconnected with this fluid. He called the fluid “animal magnetism.”

Mesmer believed that when this fluid was blocked it led to disease and sickness in the human body. Mesmer would seek to aid the flow of fluids through the use of magnets, pressure points, magnetized iron rods, and hypnosis. Hypnosis is when the conscious mind is suppressed so that one can connect to the subconscious mind, which has become highly suggestible. Though many people in the east had been practicing hypnosis for centuries, Mesmer made it popular in the modern western world. Some of his patients went into convulsions and spoke in strange voices but he believed that this was just part of the healing process.

Mesmer became so popular with the aristocrats of his day that he developed a means of treating several patients at once. He created a large wooden bath that he filled with magnetized water and iron filings. A number of iron conducting bars wove around the bath and protruded out at several interval locations. Patients put their legs in the water and held the iron bars, thus allowing the “the force” to flow through them all and bring healing.

In 1784 a Royal Commission was set up by Louis XVI to investigate Mesmer’s unorthodox practices. They did not agree with his science, but they could not argue with the fact that people had benefited from his treatments. Mesmer’s ideas continue to flourish in many New Age spiritual healing clinics today.



Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and **Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)** were both American poets and foundational leaders of the transcendentalist movement. Transcendentalism is the idea that divinity permeates all nature and humanity and all things are connected to God, therefore all is divine. Truth is not found in institutions or religions. God does not reveal truth. It is known intuitively in one’s being and through nature.



There is a strong emphasis on individualism. They believe that all people are inherently good. Society and its institutions have corrupted the purity of the individual, but people are at their best when truly “self-reliant” and independent. One has to be true to oneself and develop one’s own identity individually. But because God permeates everything, all humans are connected and one.

Emerson and Thoreau both wove Hindu philosophy into their writings which became extremely influential in American education. They are the authors of the American ethos and individualism. Their ideas laid the foundation for universalist ideas, environmentalism, the entry of Hinduism into America, and New Age enlightenment.

The Spiritualism Movement and the Occult (as already discussed in a previous unit) were extremely influential in the formation of New Age beliefs about the spiritual realm and the individual’s ability to connect to it. The first most influential figure was Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) and his ideas of Thelema, which emphasize the idea that one is free to do ‘whatever thou wilt’ and to use the power of one’s will to manifest whatever that person desires. These ideas

become core to the New Age beliefs that a person determines one's own morality through the power of visualization.

The second most influential figure was Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and her philosophy of Theosophy. She popularized the idea that all religions are the same and that eventually humanity would evolve into a corporate unified utopian society of enlightenment and peace. This idea is a core belief of the New Age Movement.



Alice Bailey (1880-1949) was a British-American writer who wrote extensively about Theosophy. She described the majority of her work as having been telepathically dictated to her by a 'Master of the Ancient Wisdom'. She envisioned a unified society called a global "spirit of religion" that would lead to a utopian age. She is the first person to use the title 'New Age' in her writings. She taught that humanity was currently in the zodiac age of Pisces, which was the age of Christianity. But this would be followed by the Age of Aquarius, which would usher in the coming of Lord Martyria and the New Age of utopian enlightenment. Many have called her the founder of the New Age movement.

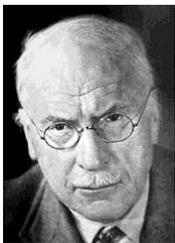
The Psychology Influences

At the core of the New Age movement is the idea that one needs to explore the human consciousness if one is to truly understand oneself. The New Age has drawn heavily on the idea of experiential psychology.



William James (1842-1910) taught anatomy, psychology, and philosophy at Harvard. He was interested in altered states of consciousness. He studied these through drugs and psychic medium practices. He believed that the unconscious mind was always in process of continuous thought. Influenced by eastern mysticism, he believed that there was a universal cosmic consciousness to which humans' subconscious minds were connected.

He believed that humans had the ability to modify their behavior through positive thinking and visualization, which is the basis of holistic healing in the New Age movement today. He believed that the inner spiritual part of a human was the true self and that the body was merely an expression of the inner self. His ideas initiated the study of the unconscious mind by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.



Carl Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who founded analytical psychology. He was a disciple of Freud but eventually parted ways due to a difference of opinion on what the unconscious mind is. Jung believed that the human psyche could be divided into three parts. The conscious mind was the thoughts, emotions, desires, and memories of which one is aware. This is called the ego, which is the conscious personality of the person that makes choices. The second is the personal unconscious mind, which are the thoughts, emotions, desires, and memories of which one is not consciously aware. These are the things that the ego has deemed insignificant, disregarded for many different reasons, or repressed due to their distressing nature, but they still affect the ego and the choices it makes. These are ideas that can create unhealthy behaviors in the individual. The third is the collective unconscious mind, which consists of ideas, images, symbols, and common themes that are not unique to the individual but are shared by everyone. They influence one's thoughts, behaviors, and worldview.

Jung called these images and themes archetypes. As he studied mythologies, religions, and people's dreams he found that they are shared common archetypes regardless of their gender, culture, or time period. He concluded that all people are born with and influenced by this shared collective unconsciousness.

He believed that dreams revealed the archetypes that were influencing the individual and through analysis of dreams one could know one's true self and the meanings that lay in the unconscious mind. He believed that one was responsible for looking inward and responsible for his or her own transformation.



Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) was an Austrian medical doctor and psychoanalyst. He believed in the concept of “bioenergy flow” through the body. Influenced by Freud he taught that the repression of the emotions and sexual instincts could lead to “blockages” resulting in rigid patterns of behavior called “character armor” and the tightening of specific muscle groups called “body armor.” Increased blockages hindered the flow of bioenergy in the body and led to the deterioration of one's health. Reich taught that breathing exercises and body massages would release the tension in the body allowing for the flow of bioenergy, which would lead to the health of the body. Reichian therapy sought to do for the body what Freudian psychoanalysis sought to do for the mind. His ideas would contribute to the New Age holistic healing centers.

The Transpersonal Influences

The birth of psychology and the idea of the unconscious mind would lead some psychologists to develop the idea of self-realization and one's ability to become the enlightened human that Helena Blavatsky anticipated.



Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) was an American professor of psychology at Brandeis University and Brooklyn College. Maslow was strongly opposed to the behavior theories that dominated most American psychologists who were influenced by the Gestalt theory, which is the idea that the analysis of the parts does not lead to an understanding of the whole.

Maslow believed that humans should be viewed in terms of their total potential. He developed the “hierarchy of needs,” which was a multi-level pyramid of basic needs that all humans have. These were physiological, safety, belonging-love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow believed that humans were good, but their bad behavior was the result of a distorted image of themselves as a result of unmet needs. If these needs were met and the distorted self-images were dealt with then humans could accomplish anything. This was called self-actualization, which he defined as “the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, and potentialities.”

In 1948 Maslow joined American psychologist Anthony Sutich (1907-1976) in his work. Sutich blended mysticism, Zen Buddhism, and psychology together in group therapy sessions that emphasized spiritual and emotional development. When he learned of Maslow's self-actualization pyramid, he was eager to work with him. Together they developed the concept of transpersonal psychology (trans-humanistic). This was the state beyond self-actualization where one achieved a mystical, ecstatic, and spiritual state of perfection, completeness and oneness with the universe. This would eventually give birth to the Human Potential Movement.

Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, was started in 1962 by Michael Murphy and Dick Price. They created a retreat center that would be dedicated to transpersonal growth, meditation, bioenergy massage, yoga, psychology, ecology, spirituality, and organic food. It focused on partner and group self-directed therapy in order to fully realize the human potential. Esalen Institute offers classes on Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and shamanism. Students can participate in self-guided emotional awareness sessions, T'ai Chi, massages, hypnosis, dance, and body awareness sessions. The focus is on feeling good about oneself and self-actualization. Esalen Institute became the template for many other New Age retreats and health clinics that exist throughout America

The Psychedelic Drugs Influences



Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) was a humanist who wrote on topics like parapsychology and philosophical mysticism. In 1932 he published *Brave New World* where he told of a futuristic World State of genetically modified citizens and an intelligence-based social hierarchy, that enslaved its citizens with pleasure and entertainment. He did not see a future like George Orwell's *1984* where a totalitarian government oppressed its citizens through war and violence but instead he saw a future where the masses willingly accepted their subjugation.

This subjugation came about through mass media, the misapplication of technology to entertain people into specificity and complacency, and people under the control of mood-altering drugs. He feared a day when people would give up their freedom in exchange for entertainment and pleasure. In *Brave New World* the government used a drug called soma, which tranquilized and intoxicated the citizens into an artificial happiness that made them content with their lack of freedom.

“The real hopeless victims of mental illness are to be found among those who appear to be most normal. Many of them are normal because they are so well adjusted to our mode of existence, because their human voice has been silenced so early in their lives, that they do not even struggle or suffer or develop symptoms as the neurotic does. They are normal not in what may be called the absolute sense of the word; they are normal only in relation to a profoundly abnormal society. Their perfect adjustment to that abnormal society is a measure of their mental sickness. These millions of abnormally normal people, living without fuss in a society to which, if they were fully human beings, they ought not to be adjusted.” (Aldous Huxley. *Brave New World Revisited*.)

Huxley was a mystic who believed that humans could only achieve their full potential if they were free from the restrictions of religious institutions and governments. If the doors of perception (spiritual eyes) were cleansed, everything would appear to one as infinite and interconnected as one. He believed that the use of hallucinogenic drugs would create a true mystical experience that would awaken the true self and connect one to the universe. Huxley along with Humphry Osmond coined the word psychedelic, to describe the mystical drug experience.

Huxley related how in 1953 he took mescaline and waited for the results. He experienced the revelation of “I became Not-Self” and the everyday objects around him seemed to radiate jewel-like colors with a profound significance. He felt “contemplation at its height.”

“It lowers the barrier between the conscious and subconscious and permits the patient to look more deeply and understandingly into the recesses of his own mind. The deepening of self-knowledge takes place against a background of visionary and even mystical experience.” (Aldus Huxley. “Wings that Shape Men’s Minds.” Saturday Evening Post. Oct. 18, 1958, pp. 111-13.)

In 1954 he published *The Doors of Perception* where he gives an account of his drug experiences and how they helped create a mystical experience. However, Huxley did not encourage people to freely experiment with drugs. He did warn of the dangers of such experiments, that they could take one to hell just as easily to heaven. His books and interviews sparked the debate over drugs and mysticism. At this point in America the use of drugs was not illegal and many psychologists were already experimenting with mescaline, psilocybin, and LSD to aid in psychoanalyst and induce mystical experiences.

His interest lay in the mystery of human consciousness and the power of modern pharmacology to unlock the doors that have restricted human minds to the demands of everyday survival. He believed that humans would always need some form of chemical assistance to achieve the full potential of their minds. Though he abhorred the use of drugs to control people like in *Brave New World* he did approve of the perfected LSD that is used in a shamanistic religious way.

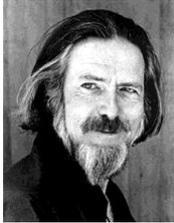
“Modern pharmacology has given us a host of new synthetics, but in the field of the naturally occurring mind changers it has made no radical discoveries. All the botanical sedatives, stimulants, vision revealers, happiness promoters and cosmic-consciousness arousers were found out thousands of years ago, before the dawn of history. In many societies at many levels of civilization attempts have been made to fuse drug intoxication with God-intoxication. In ancient Greece, for example, ethyl alcohol had its place in the established religion. Dionysus, or Bacchus, as he was often called, was a true divinity. His worshipers addressed him as Lusios, “Liberator,” or as Theoinos, “Godwine.” The latter name telescopes fermented grape juice and the supernatural into a single pentecostal experience... Unfortunately, they also receive harm. The blissful experience of self-transcendence which alcohol makes possible has to be paid for, and the price is exorbitantly high.” (Aldous Huxley. *Moksha: Aldous Huxley’s Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience*.)

“The ordinary waking consciousness is a very useful and, on most occasions, an indispensable state of mind; but it is by no means the only form of consciousness, nor in all circumstances the best. Insofar as he transcends his ordinary self and his ordinary mode of awareness, the mystic is able to enlarge his vision, to look more deeply into the unfathomable miracle of existence. The mystical experience is doubly valuable; it is valuable because it gives the experiencer a better understanding of himself and the world and because it may help him to lead a less self-centered and more creative life.” (Aldous Huxley. *Moksha: Aldous Huxley’s Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience*.)

In 1962 he published the book *Island* where he tells the story of a utopian society where everyone lives in the moment, free from materialism and government restriction, and is engaged in intellectual pursuits, and deep spiritualism. Here they use drugs like a shaman in order to transcend the limitations that the material realm puts on the mind. The drugs enable them to see themselves for who they really are and also to see the solutions to their problems. In this society

there is group living in Mutual Adoption Clubs, formed so that the children would not be exposed to their parents' neuroses.

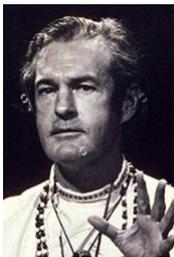
Huxley is widely acknowledged as one of the pre-eminent intellectuals of his time and is considered to be the "spiritual father" of the hippie movement, which is anti-establishment, and promotes mystical drug use, free love, and the pursuit of enlightenment.



Alan Watts (1915-1973) was a British-American who interpreted and popularized Eastern philosophy for the Western college students. He received a master's degree in theology at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. In 1945 he became an Episcopal priest. He then renounced Christianity and left the ministry in 1950. He began to teach Zen Buddhism and Taoism at the School of Asian Studies in San Francisco, California.

He then began to experiment with LSD, believing it to be the key to self-actualization. From this point on he rejected the bourgeois suburban values and his lifestyle blended free love, mysticism, and psychedelics. He believed that Christianity did not trust humanity's natural urges and that it minimized the flesh in favor of the spirit, which it got from the dualism of the ancient Greeks.

He believed that Zen Buddhism could help alienated and lonely people find spiritual "release." He was a skilled teacher and radio broadcaster on KPFA radio in Berkeley. He also frequently visited colleges across the country teaching Zen Buddhism and the benefits of psychedelic drugs for a mystical experience. He also addressed all the current issues of the day that the middle class and the Church considered risqué or controversial.



Timothy Leary (1920-1996) was a Harvard professor and psychologist who was greatly influenced by his friend Aldous Huxley. In 1960 on vacation with his family in Mexico he took magic mushrooms ("the flesh of the gods") for the first time. He began to contemplate the nature of his own life-force, his arteries, and he felt as if his body contained a myriad of universes, and his cells seemed to hold the secret to life and energy. He said that it was a religious experience and that he had come back a changed man.

He returned to Harvard and joined fellow Harvard professors Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert. They became known as The Harvard Triumvirate and began to explore inner space as the heads of the Harvard Psychedelic Drug Research Project.

"We did sense that we were not alone. The quest for internal freedom, for the elixir of life, for the drought of immortal revelation was not new. We were part of an ancient and honorable fellowship which had pursued this journey since the dawn of recorded history. We began to read the accounts of earlier trippers — Dante, Hesse, René Daumal, Tolkien, Homer, Blake, George Fox, Swedenborg, Bosch, and the explorers from the Orient -- tantrics, Sufis, Bauls, Gnostics, hermetics, Sivaites, sadhus... no, we were not alone."
(Timothy Leary. *Politics of Ecstasy*, p. 131.)

They began to experiment with psilocybin, a psychedelic synthesized from mushrooms, on prison inmates to aid in their rehabilitation. He stated that the drugs broke down the barriers between them and made them all one. Some of the inmates became well-mannered and were paroled.

In 1961 he took LSD, which took him a deeper trip that made him question his identity as a husband and father, nature, society, and moral laws. He realized that all of it was illusory and

merely constructs. Then the constructs fell away and he fell into a vortex of colors and vibrations and he dissolved into the universe. When the effects of LSD wore off, he felt a deep sense of loss. He asked the questions “Why have we lost it? Why were we being reborn?... into these silly leather bodies with these trivial little cheese-board-minds?” He had reached the highest level of consciousness that had truly defined reality and beingness. He continued to experiment and discuss his findings with other psychologists experimenting with psychedelic drugs.

“In the months that followed [our experimentation with psychedelic drugs] we began to see ourselves as unwitting agents of a social process that was far too powerful for us to control or more than dimly understand. A historical movement that would inevitably change man at the very center of his nature, his consciousness.” (Timothy Leary. *Politics of Ecstasy*, p. 131.)

On Good Friday in 1962 they conducted the Good Friday Experiment. They carefully screened and choose twenty theological students and put them in a church. Some were given psilocybin and others a placebo. Then they conducted a church service with music, prayer, and a sermon. Those who had taken psilocybin had a much more intense religious experience. They experienced a feeling of oneness, a connection to God, a positive feeling, and these feelings persisted in the weeks that followed.

The media began to report on the experiments, and other Harvard psychologists were furious, stating that psychedelic drugs were dangerous and harmful. This sparked a campus debate, police investigations, and the dismissal of the Harvard Triumvirate in 1963. Leary entered the media and began to promote psychedelic drugs in the western culture. Within three years recreational drug use in the hippie counterculture in England and America was widespread.

“Huxley’s eyes were closed. Suddenly he clapped his hands. ‘Your role is quite simple. Become a cheerleader for evolution. That’s what I did and my grandfather before me. These brain-drugs will bring about vast changes in society. We must spread the word... The obstacle to this evolution, Timothy, is the Bible.’” (Timothy Leary. *Flashbacks*, p. 44.)

Timothy Leary went to the media promoting the countercultural movement and the use of psychedelic drugs for self-actualization. He urged the youth to “turn on, tune in, drop out” referring to the drug experience. Eventually he would hook up with Beatles, and specifically John Lennon, in the countercultural movement. Leary became very influential in starting the hippie movement for he was a former member of the authoritative establishment who left and was now opposing it. In his later years of his life he was arrested on many occasions for drug possession and sentenced to prison on multiple occasions. But his influence still continued.

The Cultural Influences

In the two centuries before the WWII, the United Kingdom had led the industrial revolution and ruled over the greatest empire on earth. The force behind this power was a class system known as ‘the establishment’, led by the monarchy and the heads of all the institutions. The establishment ordered and controlled society and it divided the people of England between two classes, the few with power with great wealth and the many with nothing. The middle class was just developing. England was a society of subjects, not citizens. Those in power told everyone how to live, often through “Christian” idealism. But WWII had devastated England, the empire was collapsing, the industrial revolution was declining, the subjects were the ones suffering, and the establishment was reasserting its power. People were losing hope. America was slightly different because Americans had no monarchy and were not devastated by WWII. America’s industrial revolution

was peaking, and consumerism was really thriving. But there was an undercurrent fear of nuclear war because of the ‘cold war’ between the west and the Soviet Union.

But in America, like the United Kingdom, there was a cultural establishment that determined how people were to look and behave. There was a preformed mold of prim and proper fashion and behavior that was expected of people. And subjects like sex were taboo. Introspectiveness and a true open and honest sharing of feelings was not encouraged. Families were struggling to connect. The industrial revolution had taken the father out of the home to work in factories and public education had taken the older children out of the home. Mothers were isolated with younger children. A large number of fathers were physically absent because they had died in the war. Other fathers were absent emotionally because they could not share the horrors of war that they had witnessed. This does not mean that every family was like this or that there was nothing good about this time. But this was a significant percentage of the culture, and that would lead to the counterculture movement.

During this time a new class in society was growing called ‘the teenagers.’ Previously, young boys would dress like their dads and go into the same work field as their dads. The girls would learn how to cook in the kitchen with their mothers. They were moving from childhood to adulthood with their parents. Now the youth were receiving a better education than their parents. They were earning their own money and had more money to spend than their parents had at their age. They lived in a more consumer driven culture than their parents. They were becoming more disconnected from their parents and without the adult guidance a cultural gap began to grow. They became frustrated with the establishment and the norms of society. They wanted to spend their money their way and do their own thing and not look like their parents. They were teenagers who arose from a new and growing middle class. They were a part of the working class, but they had more opportunities than their parents, were unfazed by the educated, but had no real identity. They would start the countercultural movement in the west. The countercultural movement was an underground anti-establishment movement that developed throughout much of the Western world during the 1950s. The Beatles would make it a widespread public phenomenon in the mid-1960s.

The Birth of the New Age



The Beatles (1960-1970) were a British rock band from Liverpool, England, which consisted of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr and are considered the most influential band of all time. They were born into this working-class society and were angry, anti-establishment and anti-religion teenagers. They embraced and promoted pro self-expression. But due to their high intelligence and education they were clever about how they expressed this while under the control of the establishment. Between 1957 and 1960 these four teenagers met each other, formed a rock band, and named themselves The Beatles.

In 1960 a business man named Brian Epstein noticed The Beatles and became their music manager. Epstein knew their unique style would not be accepted by the music industry who controlled musicians looks, lives, wrote their music, and told them what to sing. Even the rock and roll music of people like Elvis, Buddy Holly, Eddie Valens, and the Beach Boys was music mostly performed by pretty boys who did and sang what they were told. What they introduced was a forceful beat that would be the spark for The Beatles. Epstein wanted to start a cultural

revolution with The Beatles but had to get them accepted first. So, he changed their looks so that they would be accepted by the establishment, but then let them loose on the world with their own style and message.

There were two big differences between The Beatles and the musicians that had come before them. First, The Beatles wrote their own music and had a unique rock sound with great harmonies. In 1963 they released their first hit in England, *Please, Please Me*. The Beatles produced hit after hit and stayed at the top of the charts for month after month in a way that no other musical group had ever done. And their songs got better and better with each hit. They made more money for the record industry than anyone had before. The second difference was the way they did interviews with the media. When others were interviewed by the media, they were proper, formal, and answered only the questions that they were asked. Unlike everyone else, The Beatles were themselves, real, comical, and almost ridiculed the whole thing.

The youth fanatically loved The Beatles in a way that had never been seen before. Girls especially manically screamed, cried, threw themselves at The Beatles, and fainted. Some people called it sexual hysteria, but it was more than that. The Beatles were the embodiment of teenagers who wanted to establish their own identity separate from their parents and in successful rebellion against the norms. It was bad behavior that people could not stop and was made acceptable by The Beatles. The screams were like the release of that pent up frustration in a cult like devotion to the ones who freed it.

In 1963 they made their way to their cult following in America. But America had been thrown into despair by the assassination of president John Kennedy. Like The Beatles, John Kennedy did not look like the older established presidents before him. He was young, charismatic, and promised a bright new future after WWII. The Beatles infused a grieving America with energy and joy with the release of their single *I Want to Hold Your Hand*.

Previously it had been the adults who had determined culture and it trickled down to the youth. But The Beatles changed everything. It was now the youth determining culture. The adults either followed or rejected it and lost their relevance. And with the boost to the economy, consumerism exploded. Styles became more eclectic, energy in the culture increased, and the development of color film added to this sense of newness and vibrance. Inspired and freed from the establishment by The Beatles, new groups began to emerge like the Rolling Stones, The Birds, The Who, and the Doors, who promoted countercultural ideas in their lifestyles and music.

By 1965 The Beatles were worn out by fame. All of them except Paul McCartney retreated to their rural homes and settled down with wives and girlfriends. Paul McCartney remained in London and entered the avant-garde community and underground counterculture movement of London. He continued to look for new styles that would later be incorporated into their music making him the driving force in the band. At the end of 1965 The Beatles released their album, *Rubber Soul*, which showed that pop music could be artistic and full of self-expression.

It was in 1964-65 that many of the young people involved in the countercultural movement began to gravitate towards the Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco. It was there that a substantial psychedelic musical scene was developing with bands like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix and the British band Pink Floyd. It was here that the people of the countercultural movement went mainstream and became known as hippies. The Hippie Movement (1964-1980) sought to overthrow cultural norms through displays of bizarre behaviors and to bring world peace and harmony. Its fundamental ethos was harmony with

nature, communal living, artistic experimentation, and the widespread use of recreational drugs for the purpose self-actualization and enlightenment.

The hippies were opposed to the structures and religions of their parents' generation that they believed had only produced rigid morality, fake lifestyles, corruption of government and business, and war. The great enemies to the hippie lifestyle were the current authorities and Christianity. Thus, the concepts of Aleister Crowley's 'do what thou wilt' and Helena Blavatsky's New Age utopia became the perfect ethos to implement their beliefs and ideas. This led to the sex revolution where they believed that the traditional structure of family and monogamy were out dated and people were free to love whomever they wanted whenever they wanted, because free love was all that mattered.

Mixing the eastern beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism with the science of the unconscious mind of psychology, they began to explore their inner selves, strive for self-actualization and build a new age where everyone was true to themselves, free to follow their heart, and genuinely connected to each other in coexisting in peace, love, and harmony. The key to this cosmic self-actualization was psychedelic drugs.

“Oh yes, I pray in the morning sun. It nourishes me with its energy so I can spread my love and beauty and nourish others. I never pray for anything; I don't need anything. Whatever turns me on is a sacrament: LSD, sex, my bells, my colors, That's the holy communion, you dig?... When I find myself becoming confused, I drop out and take a dose of acid. It's a short-cut to reality—throws you right into it.”—Joyce Ann Francisico (Brown. *The Hippies*, pp. 39-40.)

During this time The Beatles began to connect to influential leaders in the hippie counterculture movement and would slowly begin to move the youth of the west towards this movement. Influenced by the psychedelic drug movement they began to take LSD to help them discover who they were.

“When I was younger, with the after-effects of LSD that opened something up inside of me in 1966, a flood of other thoughts came into my head which led me to the yogis.” (George Harrison. *Rolling Stone magazine*, Nov. 5, 1987.)

In 1966, inspired by Timothy Leary's media presence and his book, *Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, John Lennon wrote *Tomorrow Never Knows*, which became The Beatles most innovated song to date and the first psychedelic song ever made. The British and American cultures embraced it.

Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream
It is not dying, it is not dying
Lay down all thoughts, surrender to the void
It is shining, it is shining
Yet you may see the meaning of within
It is being, it is being
Love is all and love is everyone
It is knowing, it is knowing
And ignorance and hate mourn the dead
It is believing, believing

But listen to the colour of your dreams
It is not leaving, it is not leaving

John Lennon stated in many interviews that many of his songs came through automatic writing.

“If I’m on my own for three days, doing nothing, I almost leave myself completely... I can see my hands and realize they’re moving, but it’s a robot that’s doing it. It’s frightening, really... I felt like a hollow temple filled with many spirits, each one passing through me, each inhabiting me a little time and then leaving to be replaced by another.” —John Lennon (*OP*, p. 373-74.)

“But my joy is when you’re like possessed, like a medium, you know. I’ll be sitting around and it’ll come in the middle of the night or at a time when you don’t want to do it – that’s the exciting part. I don’t know who the [expletive] wrote it – I’m just sitting here and the whole [expletive] song comes out. So it’s, you’re like driven and you find yourself over on a piano or guitar and you put it down because it’s been given to you or whatever it is you tune into.” —John Lennon (John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Andy Peebles. *The Last Lennon Tapes*, p. 113.)

During this time The Beatles became very controversially outspoken about politics and antagonistic towards the establishment.

“Christianity will go... It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue with that; I’m right and I will be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now; I don’t know which will go first — rock and roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right, but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It’s them twisting it that ruins it for me.” —John Lennon (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 1966, p. 26.)

“It’s incredible, absolutely incredible. Here are these four boys from Liverpool. They’re rude, they’re profane, they’re vulgar, and they’ve taken over the world. It’s as if they’ve founded a new religion, They’re completely anti-Christ. I mean I’m anti-Christ as well, but they’re so anti-Christ, they shock me, which isn’t an easy thing to do.” —Derek Taylor (Beatles press manager) (Alfred J. Aronowitz. “The Return of The Beatles,” *Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 8, 1964, p. 28.)

For the last three years all of the United Kingdom and America loved The Beatles. But for the first time they became divided over The Beatles. The establishment began to ban The Beatles and burn their records and many adults and youth stopped following The Beatles. But many others still found a voice in The Beatles and would stay committed to the very end.

In 1966 the Vietnam War started and hundreds of thousands of Americans were drafted, most of them the youth. For the first time graphic scenes of war were being filmed by journalist and shown in America. War was no longer abstract. It had come home to America for everyone to see its horrors. In media interviews The Beatles made their anti-war views very clear. They were the first media celebrities to voice their opinion on political issues. Even though they had lost their popularity with a lot of people they also helped move a lot of people towards the hippie counterculture movement.

It was during this time that psychologists and doctors were becoming more aware of the dangers of drugs. The government began to respond with laws against the use of psychedelic drugs. On October 6, 1966, California banned the use of these drugs. In response, led by Timothy Leary and beat poet Allen Ginsberg, the hippies had a Human Be-In on January 14, 1967 in Golden

Gate Park, San Francisco. The key ideas of the festival were personal empowerment, cultural and political decentralization, communal living, ecological awareness, higher consciousness (with the aid of psychedelic drugs), acceptance of illicit psychedelics drugs, and radical liberal political consciousness. And the Beatles and the many other psychedelic bands gave their support and made the public aware.

This then led to the Summer of Love in 1967, where as many as 100,000 people, gathered at the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and thousands of others at many other places in America, Canada, and Europe. It was a time of music festivals, psychedelic drugs, and free love.

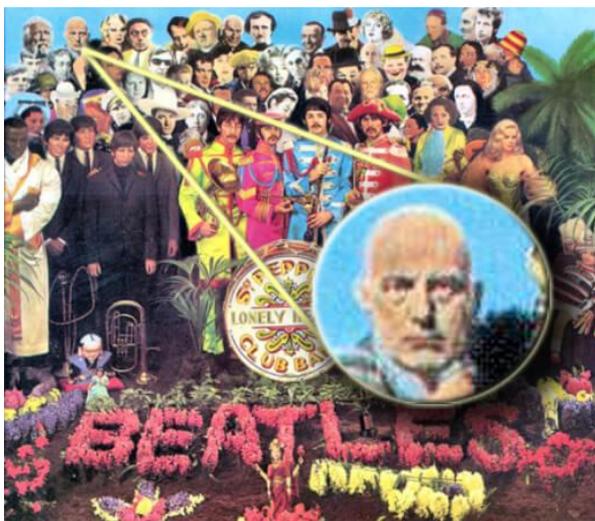
After being out of the public eye for a couple of months The Beatles returned in February of 1967. They had changed their look and sound in their release *Strawberry Fields*. It was weird and surrealist, and their followers believed they were being led down a new path to the hippie movement.

In June of 1967 The Beatles produced their most ambitious album yet, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. They created a new name and pretended that they were a new band. It was the first time a complete album had been released without any singles from it being released first. It showed the record industry that one could invest in the greatest artistic minds and give them the freedom to make their art and it would sell. Every musical group was constantly overshadowed by The Beatles with every album they released. The album cover was filled with famous psychologists, celebrities, Hindu gurus and Aleister Crowley.

“We were going to have photos on the wall of all our heroes.” —Paul McCartney (“Musician” from *Special Collection Edition: the Beatles and the Rolling Stones*, 1988, p. 12.)

“People we like and admire” —Ringo Starr (Hit Parade, Oct. 1976, p. 14.)

“Hitler and Jesus were the controversial ones, and after what John said about Jesus we decided not to go ahead with him – but we did make up the image of Hitler. If you look at photographs of the out-takes, you can see the Hitler image in the studio. With the crowd behind there was an element of chance about who you can and cannot see, and we weren't quite sure who would be covered in the final shot. Hitler was in fact covered up behind the band.” —Sir Peter Blake (Set designer)



The Beatles were who the young people were looking for meaning; they were like gods. Most people in America and England would have never been aware of the underground counterculture movement in San Francisco and the Hippie Movement would have never happened if it had not been for The Beatles making it known. It was their album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and their influence that made the Summer of Love a huge success.

“He or she [The Beatles] has come back as... the four-sided mandala [Hindu symbol of meditation]—The Beatles. The means by which to spread the new gospel—music. The sacrament—drugs.” (Timothy Leary. *Flashbacks*, p. 378.)

“...I rejoice to see our culture being taken over by joyful young messiahs who dispel our fears and charm us back into the pagan dance of harmony.”
(Timothy Leary. *Thank God for The Beatles*, p. 375.)

“You start with music then you add psychedelic drugs. Millions of kids turned on pharmacologically, listening to stoned-out electronic music designed specifically for the suggestible, psychedelized nervous system by stoned out, long-haired minstrels. This combination of electrical-pharmacological expansion is the most powerful brainwashing device our planet has ever known... an instrument for evangelical education; propaganda that few people over the age of thirty can comprehend... They are laying down a new revelation. The journey to the East.” (Timothy Leary. *Flashbacks*, p. 379.)

“The whole Beatle idea was to do what you want right?... Do what thou wilt, as long as it doesn't hurt somebody.” —John Lennon (*The Playboy Interviews*, 1980.)

In 1967 America, Canada, and the United Kingdom televised the one world broadcast, which was the first international satellite television broadcast to over 500 million viewers. England choose The Beatles to be the focus with the Rolling Stones joining them. Their message to the world was their first-time heard song *All You Need Is Love*.

With drugs now outlawed the police began to make drug arrests of many people, including key figures in the counterculture movement and members of the Rolling Stones. The Beatles spoke out against the establishment and publicly began to support the use of LSD.



In 1968 their manager and leader Brian Epstein died. Encouraged by George Harrison, The Beatles went to India with their wives and girlfriends to learn about Hinduism. The media followed and reported the entire experience. In India they meet Indian guru **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008)** who had been traveling the world teaching Transcendental Meditation, which he had developed.

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a form of silent mantra meditation for the purpose of stress relief and discovering one's inner self. It is one of the most widely practiced and researched meditation techniques. Its success was found in the fact that Maharishi Mahesh Yogi took concepts of ancient eastern meditation and mixed them with modern western psychology so that it would be accepted in the western world.

“We're going to India to study Transcendental Meditation properly. We want to learn properly so that we can propagate it and sell the whole idea to everyone. This is how we plan to use our power now. They have always called us leaders of youth and we believe that this is a good way to give youth a lead. It needn't be religion if people don't want to connect it with religion, it's all in the mind, a way to calm down tensions, strengthen understanding, and make people more relaxed.” (John Lennon)

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi became The Beatles new spiritual teacher. When they came back to Europe, they brought Hinduism and Buddhism to an extremely large audience. They taught that true reality was within and that people needed to stop looking outward. Eastern religions became extremely popular and books on the topic sold like crazy. They took America on what they called a “Magical Mystery Tour.” The next year another Hindu Guru, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada published the book *Chant and Be Happy: The Power of Mantra Meditation*, which included his interviews with John Lennon and George Harrison explaining the benefits that Hindu meditation had had in their lives.

In 1968 there was disputing among The Beatles, which would eventually lead to their disbanding. Lennon also fell in love with Yoko Ono who became everything to him.

In 1968 the war in Vietnam was meaninglessly spiraling out of control and Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. The counterculture hippie movement no longer believed ‘love is all you need’. Demonstrations that had once been peaceful exploded into violence on college campuses. In an attempt to suppress the violent protests, the police responded with brutality. Violent revolution for power took over the streets. The counterculture movement was everywhere now, and they sought to burn down the old rigid establishments and create out of the ashes a new global spirit of religion.

The Beatles released the song *Revolution*, which opposed the violence of the protests. Lennon and Ono became one of the world’s most prominent activists for peace. In 1969, Lennon released the song *Give Peace a Chance* with Timothy Leary.

In March of 1969 the hippies had a three-day festival of music and psychedelic drugs called Woodstock. More than 400,000 people attended to celebrate the coming of the Age of Aquarius. This festival showed how widespread the hippie movement had become and is considered one of the most epic moments in American history.

In 1970 members of psychedelic bands were dying due to drug overdoses, and The Beatles fell apart and disbanded. They began to do their own solo work but divided they lost the cultural impact that they had.

John Lennon produced one last hit in 1971, the song *Imagine*. It has become the anthem of a utopian society. But a world without heaven means there is no God, morality, or hope, and without hell there is no accountability and judgment for evil. What Lennon really ended up imagining was an eternal hell on earth.

Imagine there’s no heaven
It’s easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today

Imagine there’s no countries
It isn’t hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace, you

You may say I’m a dreamer
But I’m not the only one

I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world, you
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

In the same year George Harrison produced the hit *My Sweet Lord* that ended with an ancient Vedic prayer.

I really want to see you
Really want to be with you
Really want to see you Lord
But it takes so long, my Lord
(Hallelujah)
My sweet Lord (Hallelujah)
Mmm, my Lord (Hallelujah)
My sweet Lord (Hallelujah)
I really wanna know you
I'd really wanna go with you
I really wanna show you, Lord
That it won't take long, my Lord
Mmm, my Lord (Hare Krishna)
My, my, my Lord (Hare Krishna)
Oh, oh, my sweet Lord (Krishna Krishna)
Ooh (Hare Hare)

Gurur Brahmā, gurur Viṣṇur
gurur devo Maheśvaraḥ
gurus sāksāt, paraṃ Brahma
tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ.

“My idea in ‘My Sweet Lord,’ because it sounded like a ‘pop song,’ was to sneak up on them a bit. The point was to have the people not offended by ‘Hallelujah’ and by the time it gets to ‘Hare Krishna,’ they’re already hooked, and their foot’s tapping and they’re already singing along ‘Hallelujah’ to lull them into a false sense of security. And then suddenly it turns into ‘Hare Krishna,’ and they will all be singing that before they know what’s happened, and they think, ‘Hey, I thought I wasn’t supposed to like Hare Krishna!’” —George Harrison. (A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. *Chant and Be Happy*, p. 33.)

“The main thing is to get the kids... nail you when you're young and brainwash you, then they've got you for the rest of your life.” (George Harrison. “Loose Talk,” *Rolling Stone Magazine*, p. 70.)

“I don't think it is possible to calculate just how many people were turned on to Krishna consciousness by your song ‘My Sweet Lord.’” —Mukunda Goswami (A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. *Chant and Be Happy: The Power of Mantra Meditation*, p. 32.)

The 1970s saw the youth culture becoming more divided and rock music got more self-indulgent and dark occult beliefs began to infiltrate rock music. Music has now become the greatest voice in America, and it was selfish, occultic, anti-establishment and anti-Christianity.

“The 1960's witnessed an ‘occult revival,’ the likes of which hadn't been seen in the west since the fin-de-siecle (end of century) days of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, and Aleister Crowley's Golden Dawn.” (Mojo Magazine, Sept. 1999, p.79.)

According to the National Health Department during the 1960s suicide rose by 400%, unmarried people rose by 536%, pregnancies among ages 10-14 rose by 553%, STD's (Gonorrhea) among ages 15-16 rose by 226%, divorce rose by 111%, violent crime rose by 995%, and scholastic aptitude dropped by 100%.

The New Age Guides America

In the 1970s the counterculture hippie movement died out, but the momentum of its ideas did not die. It merely changed from radical and controversial figures and demonstrations to professional and positive motivational speakers, TV personalities, and book stores. The term “New Age” had changed from specifically referring to a coming Age of Aquarius to referring to a variety of alternate spiritual beliefs and practices that lead to self-actualization. Though not all New Agers believe specifically in the Age of Aquarius, they all hold to a coexist belief of religions and culture and the pursuit of self-actualization. These beliefs have influenced and shaped the worldview of every American and European whether they realize it or not. There are so many people who spread New Age beliefs from the 1970s on that this paper will only highlight a few of the most prominent examples of what the New Age looks like today.

One of the ways that the New Age was transformed in the 1970s was into The Human Potential Movement, which emphasized the development of individuals through such techniques as encounter groups, sensitivity training, and primal therapy. Moving into the 1980s and 1990s its concepts were used to promote professional advancement in the workplace. Companies brought in motivational speakers to leader seminars and training programs that utilized the movement's techniques to help employees understand their creative potential. The ultimate goal was to help people understand that “whatever you can visualize will be realized.”

New Age holistic health clinics spread throughout America. These clinics emphasized that the body, mind, and spirit are all interconnected and the health of the spirit affected the other two. Hinduistic techniques were used to develop the health of the person. Holotropic breathing was practiced, which is a method of controlled breathing meant to influence a person's mental, emotional and physical state for therapeutic results. By the late 1970s people were fully aware of the dangers of psychedelic drugs so many people began to embrace and promote yoga mediation when they saw that it produced the same effects of psychedelic drugs without the dangers.



Dr. Helen Schucman (1909-1981) was an American clinical psychologist, a research psychologist and a professor of medical psychology at Columbia University in New York. In 1976, with the help of her colleague Dr. William Thetford, she published *A Course in Miracles*. Schucman dictated the book from an inner voice, which she claimed to be Jesus. It is a course meant to help one find spiritual transformation. The book corrects the misinterpretation of the Church's understanding of Jesus' nature and teachings. It claims that everything involving space, time, perception, and one's identity in this material realm is an illusion. One's true self is found within as a person lets go of everything around oneself and becomes one with the universe. In the book, Jesus is not the specific son of God but is a collective consciousness found in the universe that anyone can tap into. This is called Christ-consciousness. Christ-consciousness is when one transcends one's reality through mediation and becomes fully aware of one's true, cosmic, higher-self. Jesus was not the only one who has achieved this state of mind but is the most accessible teacher who came to teach all humans how to achieve Christ-consciousness. Though the term was not original with Schucman, she popularized its use.

In the 1980s annual sales of the book steadily increased each year. In 1992 sales of the book exploded when author and lecturer Marianne Williamson discussed the book on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Today Oprah Winfrey offers a daily radio show on *A Course in Miracles* lead by Marianne Williamson.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” (Marianne Williamson. *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*.)



Shirley MacLaine (1934) was an actress and activist. In 1983 she published her autobiography called *Out on a Limb*, which told of her journey from Christianity to New Age spirituality. It is about her spiritual trek, which fosters in her a growing belief in reincarnation, the existence of aliens, and the immortality of the human soul. In 1987 it was made into one of the most watched television mini-series.



Oprah Winfrey (1954) is a talk show host and media executive. In 1986 she started her own television show called the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. It aired nationally for twenty-five years in over 132 countries. For years it was rated the number one daytime television show in America, and it is to this day the highest-ranking daytime talk show in American history. Oprah was a disciple at one time of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Oprah used the show as an educational platform and interviewed celebrities, politicians and everyday people with inspiring stories. Oprah has been one of the most influential people in American history shaping the beliefs of Americans. She often promoted her New Age beliefs and brought many New Age teachers on her show. She was especially popular among stay at home mothers, and if she said something it

was considered to be truth. If she promoted a book it would become an international best seller overnight. There are two people and their books that Oprah has promoted more than any others; Rhonda Byrne and Eckhart Tolle.



Rhonda Byrne (1945) is a writer and producer. In 2006 she produced the film *The Secret*. It teaches that all humans are one with the universe and if one visualizes anything, the universe will obey and give it to you. This is called the law of attraction. *The Secret* consists of many other authors explaining how to implement the principles of the law of attraction in one's life. Later that year she published a book by the same name, which has sold thirty million copies worldwide and has been translated into 50 languages. Oprah claims that she has been practicing this visualization technique for years and it is the key to her success.

“When you want to attract something into your life, make sure your actions don't contradict your desires... Think about what you have asked for, and make sure that your actions are mirroring what you expect to receive, and that they're not contradicting what you've asked for. Act as if you are receiving it. Do exactly what you would do if you were receiving it today and take actions in your life to reflect that powerful expectation. Make room to receive your desires, and as you do, you are sending out that powerful signal of expectation.”
(Rhonda Byrne. *The Secret*.)

“You will attract everything that you require. If it's money you need you will attract it. If it's people you need, you'll attract it. You've got to pay attention to what you're attracted to, because as you hold images of what you want, you're going to be attracted to things and they're going to be attracted to you. But it literally moves into physical reality with and through you. And it does that by law.” (Rhonda Byrne. *The Secret*.)



Eckhart Tolle (1948) is a German writer and spiritual teacher. In 1997 he published the book *The Power of Now* and in 2005 he published the book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. They both teach one how to look within, find one's divinity, be one with the universe, and live one's life in the moment with total contentment. They both sold an estimated three million and five million copies respectively in North America by 2009. In 2008 Oprah featured ten, two-hour webinars, talking with Eckhart Tolle about the concepts in his book, in which about 35 million people participated. *The New York Times* called Tolle “the most popular spiritual author in the United States” and he was listed by Watkins Review as the most spiritually influential person in the world.

“The answer is simple, once you realize what the ego is and how it works. When forms that you had identified with, that gave you your sense of self, collapse or are taken away, it can lead to a collapse of the ego, since ego is identification with form. When there is nothing to identify with anymore, who are you? When forms around you die or death approaches, your sense of Beingness, of I Am, is freed from its entanglement with form: Spirit is released from its imprisonment in matter. You realize your essential identity as formless, as an all-pervasive Presence, of Being prior to all forms, all identifications. You realize your true identity as consciousness itself, rather than what consciousness had identified with. That's the peace of God. The ultimate truth of who you are is not in I am this or I am that, but I Am.”
(Eckhart Tolle. *A New Earth*, p. 39.)



Deepak Chopra (1946) is an Indian-born American medical doctor, author, and public speaker. Chopra received a degree in India in internal medicine and endocrinology. As a licensed physician, he became chief of staff at the New England Memorial Hospital in 1980. In 1985 he studied Transcendental Meditation under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He resigned his position at his hospital to establish the Maharishi Ayurveda Health Center. In 1993 Chopra gained a huge following when Oprah promoted his book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, which became a New York Times best seller.

Chopra believes that a person can attain “perfect health,” a condition “that is free from disease, that never feels pain,” and “that cannot age or die.” This is possible because he believes that the human body is not matter but composed of energy and information that can be altered by the mind.



John Edwards (1969) is an American psychic medium, author, and television personality. He is sought after for his ability to talk to the dead and connect them to the living. From 2001 to 2004 he had a show on the Sci-Fi channel called *Crossing Over with John Edwards* where he gave psychic readings to audience members. It was the number one show on the Sci-Fi channel. From 2006 to 2008 he had a show on WE TV called *John Edward Cross Country*. Oprah brought him on her show many times which gained him a huge following. Dr. Oz brought

Edwards on his show in 2011, saying that Edwards had changed his life and talking to the dead can be therapeutic for those who are grieving. Thousands attend his sold-out seminars and he has a several year waiting list to do private readings.

Witnessing

Witnessing often seems scary, but try to remember you are just sharing who Jesus is to you in your life. It is important to remember that it is not your job to answer all their questions and convert them. It is your job to share who God and Jesus Christ are as you know them now at this point in your life and how they have been involved in your life.

Witnessing to Other People in General

First, pray for wisdom, pray for them, and pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit. Even if you just met them, you can still ask for God’s leading in a brief prayer.

Don’t be afraid of them or make it awkward. Remember that they are people with many of the same fears and desires that you have. They may look culturally different and sound different as they express their worldview, but at the core of their being, they are a person who wants to be loved, feel safe, and have meaning in their life. They have come to believe that the worldview they have will fulfill those needs. That is really the only thing that makes them different from you.

Second, the most important part is to love them and listen to them. Many non-Christians complain that Christians immediately share the gospel without really getting to know them. Most people do not feel like people really listen to them and get to know who they are. It is important to realize that most witnessing is the result of building a relationship with people and being involved in their life. Take the time to really listen to their desires and fear and draw them out with questions. Sometimes you will find that their beliefs are based more on childhood

experiences or being hurt by other Christians than the evidence or benefits of their religion. Understand that you may be in for the long haul, and it may take many conversations and years to lead them to Christ. You may not even see them become a Christian, but God will use you as well as many others to lead them to Christ, which may happen at the influence of another Christian long after they are out of your life.

Even if you know a lot about their religion or have met a lot of people from their religion, do not assume you know what they believe. Not everyone of the same religion necessarily has the same beliefs. Ask them what they believe and why they believe what they do. Pay attention to what they emphasize or what they spend the most time talking about because that usually is the most important thing to them. That will be the most rooted belief that will be the hardest for them to shift their perspective on. Remember not everything they believe is wrong or bad. Compare it to the basic affirmations of the Christian faith, not your personal belief preferences.

Third, it is better to start with asking them questions about what they think about Christianity than telling them what it is and why it is right. You may find that many things they believe are correct. Ask them who they think God and Jesus are. What do they think is wrong with the world and how it should be fixed? Do they think they are a good person, and why? What do they think will happen to them when they die? If you can affirm them in that belief or talk about how you believe that too, then you are starting on common ground with them, which will make you less hostile and help them feel more connected to you and more comfortable to share with you. Then you can lovingly point out the differences between what they believe and what the Bible says. Frame it as Jesus being so much more rather than “this is right” or what you have to believe.

Fourth, get them to think about how their worldview corresponds to reality. Ask them in a curious and loving way, not in a debating way, about the contradictions in their belief systems. Listen for internal contradictions as they explain their beliefs. You must listen to what they are saying and ask questions. Sooner or later you catch on to inconsistencies. Inconsistencies usually arise when discussing the relationship between their beliefs and reality. In a loving way confront them on these inconsistencies in order to show them that their beliefs do not correspond with reality. You are trying to help them step outside their belief system and see it from a different perspective. Ask them to explain how they can embrace these contradictions. Ask them the questions that you have always had about their religion or the things that do not make sense to you.

Do not get distracted by the bizarre or fringe beliefs that other people have. Focus on the majors: who God is, humanity, the problem with humanity and creation, and most importantly the solution to the problem with humanity and creation. The focus should always be on who Jesus is and His work on the cross. Share with them how Jesus provides a better relationship, path, and future.

Finally, share your story with them. They may be able to argue with beliefs, but they cannot argue against your own story. Tell them about your life before Christ, how you came to know Christ, and how He changed your life. And most importantly, tell them how Christ got you through and is getting you through your struggles. Remember, people of other religions do not have a personal relationship with a being that is all powerful and can get them through anything. They are all on their own in dealing with their struggles. Your personal stories are the most powerful tool you have in witnessing to others, for this is where Jesus becomes real in the everyday lives of everyday people.

Witnessing to People with New Age Beliefs

Ask them questions like, What's your spiritual background? What does spirituality mean to you? Have you ever had any supernatural experiences happen to you? Why are you excited about New Age beliefs?

New Age beliefs deny the existence of evil. So, ask them why do people do so many bad and sometimes horrific things to each other? They might say it is because we are not all fully enlightened yet or it is human ignorance that leads to bad deeds. Then ask them, if we are divine, then how could our mere ignorant self be so easily overcome by our divine goodness?

Ask them how they know that their beliefs are true. Often times they will say it comes through spiritual beings, meditation, or their intuition, which can be trusted. Then ask them how they know they can trust these spiritual beings. They will say that because they are enlightened beings who cannot lie. Then ask them how they know that. If there are humans who can pretend to be good and trustworthy in order to con you, could there not also be spiritual beings who do the same? Ask them how they know they can trust their intuition. Have they ever trusted someone who turned out to be untrustworthy, or were convinced that they were so right but found out they were wrong?

Do not let them redefine who Jesus is. Ask them to show you where in the Bible Jesus did that or said that. Take them to the Bible and let them see who Jesus really is. If they say you cannot trust the Bible, then ask them how they know that Jesus said the thing they just quoted Him on.

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