

# INTRODUCING INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE®



*“Like the human heart, the world points beyond itself to something greater and more beautiful than its present condition.”*

- George Leonard and Michael Murphy

“Most of us realize only a small part of our human potential,  
and as a result we live only a fraction of the life we are given.”

– George Leonard & Michael Murphy

## **INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE® (ITP)**

*Integral Transformative Practice (ITP)* is a pioneering program for transforming body, mind, heart and soul through comprehensive, long-term practice. This program is a holistic approach to cultivating healthy growth, personal transformation and positive social change.

ITP invites us to open to the furthest reaches of our capacity, with simple exercises that have been shown to produce complex, well-coordinated, creative results. Just as athletes use creative imagery to run the mile at breakneck speeds, and meditators develop amazing powers of intuition, the ITP practice offers you the opportunity to expand the expression of what it means to be a human being.

ITP is an approach that is designed to develop all of our capacities, all the dimensions of our being — ideally with the support of a community of seekers. A non-guru practice with multiple teachers and multiple practices, practitioners focus on nurturing their entire being by:

- Doing the Kata (a series of mind-body-spirit exercises) and other aerobic exercises several times a week
- Creating positive affirmations
- Eating consciously
- Developing intellectual powers through reading, writing and discussion
- Addressing conflict peacefully and constructively, with the ITP communications practice of Staying Current, which allows for taking responsibility for and expressing your feelings in healthy ways
- Committing to support others in the community

ITP is customarily practiced in a group or community setting to get the greatest benefit for growth and transformation of body and being. In community, we support one another in our growth, as each of us maintains a primary focus on our own development. However, many of these ITP practices can be done on your own or with another person.

Integral practice is not a quick-fix approach. Long-term change requires long-term practice. This practice is designed to help you define and achieve long-term goals for realizing positive and healthy transformation of body, mind, heart and soul.

When Esalen co-founder Michael Murphy and then-Board President, writer George Leonard, led personal growth workshops in the 1990's, they discovered that participants had huge gains which nearly disappeared as they returned to their 'regular lives.' From that observation, this long-term ITP practice was born, helping participants to achieve their own goals, often in a community setting.

ITP founders George Leonard and Michael Murphy wrote ***The Life We Are Given***<sup>\*</sup>, to outline the ITP practice, illustrate the *Kata* and other ITP activities, and to describe their two-year experimental study on integral practice. George Leonard is the author of many books, including ***Mastery and The Silent Pulse***; Michael Murphy's works include ***The Future of the Body*** and ***Golf in the Kingdom***.

Since its inception in 1991, ITP practice has spread throughout America and to countries around the globe. In 2005, ITP International was incorporated as a non-profit organization to support the practice of ITP and to further develop and expand the work of its founders. For more information on ITP International, please see [www.itp-international.org](http://www.itp-international.org).

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<sup>\*</sup> *The Life We Are Given – A Long-Term Program for Realizing the Potential of Body, Mind, Heart, and Soul*, by George Leonard & Michael Murphy, p. 170 (Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam Publishers, 1995, 2007 Revised).

# The ITP KATA

## *The Core of the Practice*

### ***About the ITP Kata***

The *ITP Kata* is a series of movements that embodies the definition of practice itself: it is an activity that, *for all of its benefits*, is done on a regular basis primarily *for its own sake, because it is the path upon which you walk*.

The series of mind-body-spirit exercises comprising the *Kata* are the core of ITP. The movements are intended to articulate all the muscle groups and joints in the body and to offer an opportunity for deep rhythmic breathing, relaxation, transformational imaging and meditation. The *Kata* was created by Aikido sensei and human potential pioneer, George Leonard, as a daily practice, intended to tap our latent capacities and to provide the experience of living a vital, joyful and fulfilling life.

The word *Kata* (kah-tah) is Japanese and means “form.” The ITP *Kata* was designed to be performed in 40 minutes, each element blending into the next, without a sense of haste. Its lineage can be traced back to hatha yoga, the martial arts, modern exercise physiology, Progressive Relaxation, visualization research and witness meditation.

The *Kata* offers the following benefits:

- Balances and centers the body and psyche
- Provides a generalized warm-up, speeding the heartbeat, increasing the flow of blood and sending an infusion of warmth to all parts of the body
- Articulates and lubricates practically every joint in the body
- Makes available a comprehensive course of stretches, increasing flexibility in all major muscle groups
- Includes three essential strength exercises
- Provides a full set of Progressive Relaxation exercises, in which muscle groups are tightened then allowed to relax deeply
- Presents numerous opportunities for deep, rhythmic breathing
- Includes a period devoted to transformational imaging during which the powers of intentionality can be applied to making positive changes in body and psyche
- Concludes with ten minutes of meditation

## ***The Kata***

You don't need any special equipment to do the ITP Kata, only a carpeted floor or mat or an outdoor setting, and loose clothing.

When you do the Kata, think in terms of months or years, not days or weeks. The shift from short-term to long-term term thinking and acting might well be the most important lesson this training has to offer.

### **Balance and Center – GRACE**

- G – Ground
- R – Relax
- A – Aware
- C – Center
- E - Energize

### **The Water Series**

1. Drill for water, 4 left, 4 right\*\*
2. Pump Water, 6
3. Fountain, 6
4. Finger spray, 4
5. Half windmill, 4 (left - right, left - right)??
6. Rowing, 10 left, 10 right, with reach and shake

### **Articulation**

7. Shoulder rotation, 4 forward, 4 back
8. Head rotation, 4 each of 3 variations
9. Arm swing, 12
10. Pelvic rotation, 4 left, 4 right
11. Knee rotation, 4 left, 4 right

### **Floor Series**

12. Hip joint rotation, 8
13. Quad tightening, 6 sets of 6
14. Foot rotation, 4 counterclockwise, 4 clockwise
15. Hamstring stretch
16. Hip stretch
17. Quad stretch
18. Back stretch
19. Spinal curl
20. Curl-up, 5 sets of 10
21. Elongation stretch, 2
22. Groin stretch

### **Mini Yoga**

23. Sun Salutation, 2
24. Spinal twist (left & right)
25. Deep relaxation

### **Transformational Imaging & Affirmations Ten-Minute Meditation**

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\* Number of repetitions

## THE NINE COMMITMENTS

### *The Heart of ITP*

#### ***About the Nine Commitments***

The Nine Commitments are the heart of ITP. You will find that the commitments harmonize together to support your transformative growth. They help you to remember that *the journey itself is what is truly important*.

Through adherence to these commitments, you can move forward with grace and intention, on the road to transformation. The Nine Commitments help guide us in a positive, affirming manner and give us a foundation for further exploration.

The Nine Commitments focus on personal responsibility, relationship, community, the ITP Kata, physical exercise, conscious eating, intellectual understanding and affirmations.

Just as air traffic controllers constantly bring airplanes back on course through the use of radar, we can constantly bring ourselves back on course through our commitments. Of course it may be challenging to follow these commitments, and it takes discipline to incorporate them into our daily lives. But through practice with these guiding principles, we can make long-term improvements in our mental, physical, spiritual and emotional lives.

The original eight commitments were developed based on the experiences of the participants in the first two cycles of ITP in 1992 and 1993. The ninth commitment was added in 2007 as a response to questions about our responsibility to those who are less fortunate than we are. As ITP practitioners we commit ourselves to provide service to others whenever possible.

## ***The Nine Commitments***

You don't have to wait to do every part of this practice before beginning it. Learning the practice is part of the practice and the learning never ends.

1. I take full responsibility for my practice and for all transformations of my body and being that flow from it.
2. I seek to join in community with other ITP practitioners. While maintaining my individual autonomy and authority, I commit myself to my ITP community in vision and practice.
3. I do the ITP Kata at least five times a week.
4. I accomplish at least three hours of aerobic exercise every week in increments of no less than 20 minutes. Three sessions of strength training a week are also recommended, but there is no commitment on this.
5. I am conscious of everything I eat.
6. I develop my intellectual powers by reading, writing, and discussion.
7. I open my heart to others in love and service. I stay current in expressing my feelings to those close to me.
8. For each six- to twelve-month period, I make at least one affirmation having to do with significant positive change within.
9. I am dedicated to finding ways of reaching out and offering help to those in need.

## AFFIRMATIONS

### *A Contract With Yourself*

#### ***About Affirmations***

Affirmations are clear, straightforward statements of positive personal change in body, being and performance. They represent a firm contract with yourself. They focus your best conscious efforts on transformation, while seeking to enlist powers beyond your conscious understanding.

Affirmations create an alignment in body, mind, heart and soul, which serves to integrate the individual, and create a whole being greater than the sum of the parts. In terms of the evolutionary vision that informs ITP, the infinite possibilities of Source were involved in the universe from the very beginning. Evolution is the process through which these hidden possibilities are revealed. Extraordinary life often emerges as a gift, rather than as the product of striving, because it is already there.

Affirmations are best realized by practicing what is called *Focused Surrender*. The practice of Focused Surrender combines strongly imaging a desired outcome in the present tense, and then totally surrendering to grace. When we open the way for grace, a direct connection with the divine is possible.

Affirmations are *written in the present tense* to describe *your intentions for the future*. You clarify your intentions, and write as if the positive changes have already come to pass. Affirmations are not a denial of your current reality, rather they are instruments for creating a parallel, present-tense reality in your consciousness.

## ***Practice Affirmations***

For each six to twelve-month period, you make at least one affirmation having to do with significant positive change in your own being. You include your affirmations daily, in the Kata, and seek in appropriate and healthy ways to realize those affirmations in your life.

Create a written record by writing out your affirmations. After writing the affirmations, read them carefully, then sign and date them.

It is recommended that you make no more than four affirmations for any period, always including the following commitment that is shared by the entire ITP community:

*My entire being is balanced, vital and healthy.*

Consider these questions before making your affirmations:

- Does the affirmation really represent a change in me rather than in the external world?
- Am I getting ahead of myself?
- Is this change a healthy one?
- How will this change affect others in my life?
- Do I really want this change?

## **MEDITATION**

### ***Opening to Grace***

#### ***About Meditation***

Meditation is the disciplined observation of thoughts, feelings, impulses, and sensations as well as the spontaneous turning of heart and mind toward a presence beyond the ordinary self. By combining “self-observation” with what is sometimes called “contemplative prayer,” in meditation you can contact new depths of being, awareness, and delight.

Meditation deepens an awareness that transcends your ordinary functioning. As you continue meditating, you realize that you are more than any mental picture, more than any emotion, more than any impulse, more than any bodily process, more than any pattern of experience with which you typically identify. That “something more,” you will find, brings an unshakable security, freedom and delight.

The all-encompassing embrace of meditation helps sustain a radical renewal of your entire organism. Because it transcends your particular parts, it helps you rise above the many obstacles to growth we encounter. In the course of meditation, many people experience a gratitude for life that impels them to commune with a higher power. The sense of blessedness that deep meditation bestows turns the heart toward the source of things. Meditation naturally turns to that source, asking for nothing more than loving contact with it.

## ***Practice Meditation***

**Posture.** Assume a sitting position with back straight, on a floor cushion with your legs crossed or in a chair. An erect sitting posture, either on a cushion that elevates your seat from the ground or in a straight-backed chair, will help you remain alert. During meditation, a good physical attitude facilitates a good psychological attitude. An alert but relaxed posture tends to produce an alertly poised state of mind. In this, the body and inner life mirror one another.

**Relaxed Focus.** Place your attention a few feet in front of you. Do not stare or strain to concentrate. Instead, maintain a relaxed focus, as if you were gazing into at a gentle stream. This style of attention, this soft downward look, is not as fatiguing as staring. It also helps to keep your mind from drifting. You can also meditate with eyes closed.

**Breathing.** When your posture is comfortable, let your belly expand. Make sure that your breath is not confined to your chest. Full, relaxed respiration, in which both the lower and upper abdomen are involved, is more conducive to meditation than constricted breathing, which typically causes or is caused by anxiety. Anchor your attention in the rise and fall of your breath. Focus on your lower abdomen and return to it whenever your mind wanders.

**Awake and Aware.** As your posture, gaze, and respiration join to form a state of alert relaxation, remain calmly present to your stream of consciousness, to both its familiar and unfamiliar patterns. Do not judge yourself, for in meditation of this kind there is no “good” or “bad.” You are simply deepening your self-awareness, whatever it brings to light. You are getting more intimate with yourself. You are gently exercising new control of your mind and exploring new depths of your body and soul.

## STAYING CURRENT

### *Cultivating Relationship*

The Staying Current practice is one of the Nine Commitments, and aims to minimize suffering in your heart and in the world:

*“I open my heart to others in love and service. I stay current in expressing my feelings to those close to me and take care of my emotional needs in appropriate and healthy ways, seeking counsel when needed.”*

To nurture self-awareness and general psychological health, we share concerns that we have with ourselves, others or the community as a whole. The intention of this practice is to use peaceful and skillful communications to build and deepen human connection. There is enormous comfort and healing found in witnessing the truth of another person’s experience, hearing and understanding what is being shared as well as being heard and understood. Staying current is one powerful method for affirming life.

The focus of the sharing is on the circumstance and feelings rather than on any opinions or judgments. Timing is very important for this intimate sharing and allows for mutual respect in the process. For the person or group receiving this information, it is important to be fully present and willing to listen.

Through self-revelation in an atmosphere of trust, we learn to accept attributes we had not recognized or fully appreciated. We get new perspectives on our habitual patterns of feeling and thought and new foundations for work on ourselves and with others.

## STAYING CURRENT GUIDELINES

### ***Guidelines:***

- Bring your whole being-body, mind, heart and soul into the conversation.
- Stay in your body and observe the physical sensations that you are having.
- Use physical sensations as energy.
- Avoid judgments of the other.

### ***Invitation:***

- Choose an appropriate time to stay current with yourself, another person or the group

### ***Connection:***

- Connect with oneself and the other, using various practices such as centering and grounding, breathing deeply, openness, right speech, etc.
- Acknowledge and share feelings about staying current.
- Describe and write (optional) what your intentions are about staying current.

### ***Conversation:***

- Describe the issue that is troubling you.
- Share your feelings and acknowledge patterns.
- Allow the listener(s) to repeat back to you what you have said.
- See what is true for the other and avoid judgments of the other. Share points of view and responses.
- Stay open to the wide range of options for resolving. Realize that the greater number of perceived options increase the likelihood of a more favorable outcome.
- Acknowledge that there are multiple points of view.

### ***Learning and Closure:***

- Describe the learning.
- Create agreements.
- Review the staying current process and reflect on intentions.
- Express appreciation and gratitude.

## LEONARD ENERGY TRAINING (LET)

### *The Body as Teacher*

*Leonard Energy Training* (LET) is a discipline developed by Aikido sensei George Leonard, and inspired by the martial art of Aikido, combined with western psychology, and physical theory. It teaches practical, alternative ways of dealing with life situations while enhancing the flow of vital energy. LET relies on the profound wisdom of the body. Once we are aware of its subtle power, the body becomes a sensitive antenna for tuning into nature and other people. A small, handy model of the universe, it is a royal road to the unconscious. All the books, computers, and electronic networks in this world contain only a miniscule fraction of the information it takes to create one human body.

In ITP, we offer exercises that call upon *the body as teacher*, not only to show us how to live a more balanced, vital, and healthy life but also to point the way toward the next stage of human evolution. We see body, mind, heart, and soul as co-equal manifestations of the human essence, but *when deep-down human change is concerned, there is no more effective teacher than the body*. In a culture that has traditionally downgraded the flesh and routinely characterized it as a threat to the workings of the mind, this statement might seem strange. But far from opposing the mind, *the body reflects the mind and is reflected by it with amazing fidelity*.

By increasing bodily awareness, by tuning in to the fascinating information the body is continually broadcasting to mind, heart, and soul, we can increase awareness of the world through every domain of our existence and create a harmonious relationship between our many parts. We can also follow the body's guidance in developing new ways of dealing with everyday problems and, beyond that, to develop extraordinary capabilities you didn't know you had.

## PRINCIPLES OF LEONARD ENERGY TRAINING

- 1. You are the authority.** Anything you experience is valid for you. You are responsible for who you are and for what you do, perceive, and feel.
- 2. The capacity of the human being and of human society is largely untapped.** We use only a small portion of the incredible potential available to us. It is possible to experience life in all of its dimensions—physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social—more deeply, creatively, and meaningfully than we typically do, or are expected by society to do.
- 3. The body is a highly effective learning facility.** It is fully instrumented, with millions of feedback circuits, and the feedback is practically instantaneous. Once you've tuned in to your body, you've tapped an almost limitless source of learning.
- 4. A centered body leads to a centered life.** Your bodily stance goes a long way toward indicating your stance in life. The human body can be taken as a metaphor for everything else in existence.
- 5. Expect nothing. Be ready for anything.** Readiness, of course, is a good thing. But expectations get in the way of readiness.
- 6. Put it on the mat.** In other words, develop your talents, make them public, and be willing to be a fool. Take appropriate risks. Don't hoard yourself.
- 7. Take the hit as a gift.** Challenges can be energizing. Don't deny the existence of negative happenings. Use them! Even some of the shocks and blows that people experience can help you achieve your potential if you know how to handle them.
- 8. Personal intention carries great power.** Intention is what you consciously or unconsciously aim for or establish as purpose. Your intention, if strong enough, has an almost unbelievable power to create your reality.
- 9. A change of context makes transformation possible and, indeed, likely.** The word "context" comes from the Latin terms "con" and "texere," meaning "to weave together." How you weave your world together, how you see things, has a lot to do with how you deal with life's situations and what happens to you. To change perception is often to change experience. Most LET exercises involve a change of context.



*Summary of the IONS Transformation Study by  
Cassandra Vieten, IONS President & Research Director*

A yearlong study of ITP practitioners investigating the relationship between ITP practice and health and well-being outcomes has been completed. The results have been submitted for publication in an academic journal. Beginning in September 2006, 53 ITP practitioners were asked to complete questionnaires three times – at the beginning of the year, half-way through, and at the end of the year. The questionnaires asked about demographics, religious and spiritual background, amount and type of ITP practices engaged in, and self-report measures of physical health, psychological health, perceived stress, quality of life, daily spiritual experiences, and self-transcendence. Self-transcendence can be defined as (a) a desire to discover meaning in human existence, (b) growing spirituality involving both an expansion of boundaries of the self and an increased appreciation for present moment experience, or (c) a developmental process of growth in wisdom as described in the contemplative traditions. At the end of the study, the data were analyzed for trends over the year.

In a nutshell, we discovered that participants demonstrated statistically significant improvements in general physical health, quality of life, and in psychological well-being, specifically in the areas of vitality, self-control, and positive well-being. Participants also reported significant reductions in physical health symptoms, even though they had an average age of 55 years. When we investigated possible relationships to explain these encouraging results, we found that the amount of time and involvement with ITP practice was related to greater psychological well-being and self-transcendence, but, unexpectedly, not to improved physical health. However, increased self-transcendence predicted improved physical health, and this was accounted for by improvements in psychological well-being. Our results suggest that involvement in ITP may lead to greater self-transcendence, greater psychological well-being, and in turn improved physical health. This concept challenges traditional logic that improving physical health should be first attained, with subsequent increases in psychological and existential well-being, and is supported by some prior theory and research.

Our findings are far from generalizable, but rather point the way for future research on the promise of ITP to enhance human potential. Possible projects on the horizon are investigation of ITP practice on extraordinary functioning, and research on objective biological outcomes and mechanisms, such as effects of ITP on aging and telomerase activity or effects of ITP practice on gene expression. The IONS research team is grateful to those individuals who donated their time and contributed to this exciting project.

## ITP INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES

### PUBLICATIONS - PARTIAL

- *The Life We Are Given* by George Leonard and Michael Murphy
- *Mastery* by George Leonard
- *LET Manual* by George Leonard and Joel Kirsch
- *The Future of the Body* by Michael Murphy

### DVD & AUDIO

- *The Tao of Practice* DVD – the ITP Kata, a 40 minute series of movements
- *Inspiring Words from The Life We Are Given* CD
- *Kata CD with Barry Robbins and Pam Kramer*
- *LET DVD with Charlotte Hatch*

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