

Discovering the Law of Attention

By Paula Godwin Coppel

“If we want deep peace, abiding love, and lasting happiness, we need only wake up to the heaven that is already here.”

Millions of people have become enamored of *The Secret* as a way to achieve more abundance in their lives. Newly empowered by the law of attraction, they are busily conjuring images of what they want—holding their desires in mind and asking the universe for the cars, jobs, money, partners, vacations, whatever they believe will make them happy.

There is no real harm in applying *The Secret* this way. However, it does perpetuate a disturbing underlying premise: the idea that something is missing and that we must find—or attract—that thing in order to be happy and whole. The very word *attraction* implies that we must bring something else into our lives in order to be complete.

Madison Avenue was built on this concept and indeed relies on it every year to sell billions of dollars worth of advertising. We often fall prey to these ads, buying everything from makeup to medicine in order to find happiness.

But deep down, we know better. There is something in us that knows, if only on the subconscious level, that we are already whole, perfect, and complete just as we are. Our peace and joy come from within, not from outside. We are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is God’s good pleasure to give us

the kingdom, right here, right now. There is nothing to “attract” because nothing is missing.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” What else could we possibly want?

An honest answer would be: We want to know this heaven. We want to see it and experience it, every day.

And for that, we need a deeper secret than the law of attraction. We need what I would call the law of attention. For although it can be entertaining to manifest outer things, what we manifest on the outside is less important than what we manifest on the inside. If we want deep peace, abiding love, and lasting happiness, we need only wake up to the heaven that is already here.

When we enact the law of attention—when we apply the power of our perception to a full experience of the present moment—we are lifted to a fuller awareness of our oneness with God and with all of creation.



Applying the law of attention doesn't take years of study. It doesn't require buying, attracting, or pursuing anything. It happens simply through a shift in focus—and the reward is instantaneous.

A few years ago, I experienced the power of attention in a most moving and memorable way.

I had been reading Eckhart Tolle's landmark book *The Power of Now*, noting how often I was not fully present in my daily life. In particular, I realized that I often half-listened when my children, Ben and Emily, were talking to me while I cooked and cleaned.



One night, I decided to respond differently. As I was setting the dinner table, Emily, then 13, came in and began telling me about a problem with a friend. Instead of continuing my task and answering her with rote “uh-huhs” and “really?’s,” I put down the silverware and turned full around to face her. I looked right into her eyes and focused entirely on her and every word she was saying.

After a few seconds, my attention on her became so intense that the room around us disappeared. I lost all sense of self and felt as though I was falling into her—into the pools of her eyes, into her soft voice and tender heart. I felt overcome by my oneness with her, and tears filled my eyes.

A few weeks later, I told a spiritual mentor about this experience with my daughter, trying to make sense of it.

“I felt like I was falling into her,” I said.

“You were,” said my teacher. “You were falling in love.”

Yes, that was it. Once the distractions were cleared, once I was totally present, the way was open for a rush of love.

Interestingly, I have had similar experiences with perfect strangers in a Unity class or workshop when we were instructed to look into one another's eyes for a minute or two without speaking. While this exercise initially feels awkward and uncomfortable, invariably a deep connection occurs. I typically find myself moved to tears, having looked into the soul and humanity of someone who is both unknown to me and yet, through the great interconnected web of life, part of me.

Unity's poet laureate, James Dillet Freeman, captured this state of being in his beautiful book, *Be!*:

I have walked down a street crowded with strangers when suddenly they were not strangers and I felt myself expand and take them in. I felt their loneliest longings, their loftiest aspirations, their hopes and fears, their love and faith and joy. I was the self that transcends self, the larger self that is not bound by space and time, the self that knows that it is one with the reality in all people.

It thrills and amazes me that this mystical oneness can be achieved with anyone or anything, at any time, by being fully attuned to what is before us. What we give our attention to grows before our very eyes. When we pay close attention, our perception takes us deeper and deeper still.

Poet William Blake expressed how wonder-filled this awareness can be when he wrote:

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*

Such insights remind us that the simple pleasures are the deepest. The most fulfilling moments in life are not characterized

by complexity, or acquiring or possessing. They are a product of simple awareness, pure consciousness and love.

The law of attention opens the way for our connection to the divine. We sharpen our focus on what is in front of us and feel ourselves become open and receptive. At such times, we see with soft eyes. We perceive the highest and best in others. We are attuned to the voice of God.



Some of my most inspiring teachers in this practice have been animals, who surely provide the greatest examples of living in the present moment. While they do not have the intellectual abilities of humans to reason, plan, imagine, and so on, neither are they encumbered by the complexities we self-create. They live in pure simplicity, for better or worse. And in the quiet moments we share with them, they bring home the power of the present.

One cold, rainy winter night several years ago, I realized at 3 a.m. that I had left my cat outside. I scurried downstairs, opened the front door, and found her sitting quietly on the front stoop, wet and cold. I towel-dried her, and five minutes later she was snug, warm, and asleep beside me in bed. I compared her response to how a human might react: There was no drama (“It’s about time you opened the door. I’m freezing!”); no guilt-tripping (“What in the world were you thinking, leaving me out there?”); no retaliation (“You can forget about snuggling with me after that little escapade!”). She did not waste her time on the past or the future; the present moment was too valuable to miss.



We live in a perfect world, with blessings so deep and vast they are almost too much to take in. Marianne Williamson was right when she said it is our light that frightens us most; this bright, amazing, beautiful, wondrous, incomprehensible universe can seem too good to be true.

And yet, it is true. When we realize that, and awaken to it, there is no wanting, no craving, no need to attract more. We are truly basking in the divine, a moment at a time.

The law of attraction can help us improve the circumstances of our lives and is valuable for doing so. The risk is if we begin to believe this is all there is. Our ego is perfectly capable

of conjuring up one thing after another that it thinks we “need” in order to be happy. We then find ourselves on the same treadmill that has led so many people to live, in Thoreau’s words, “lives of quiet desperation,” always chasing after the next thing.

By contrast, the law of attention implies a peaceful practice and expanded awareness. Attention is a manifestation of love, so being more attentive means being more loving. We know this from our own experience: When someone pays attention to us—looking, listening, giving—we feel cared about. Conversely, when someone ignores us, we feel demeaned, insignificant, unloved.

The more we focus on the present, the more we experience “the peace that passes all understanding,” and the more ably we radiate that peace to others. The kingdom is at hand; the true riches of life are already here. As we release our need to own, to get, and to have, we can apply the power of attention to discover the true bliss that comes from no-self and no-thing at all.

