

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

A Lifelong Experience with Alpha

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REVIEWER'S NOTE: In this context, *alpha* is a label for a subjective state learned during the Silva mind-control practices and does not necessarily correspond to alpha EEG. It is most likely similar to states learned by autogenic training, mindfulness, breathing, etc.

In 1972, I met a man named Charles who wanted to open a business that taught the José Silva Mind Cybernetics classes. At 25, and fresh home from Viet Nam, I had no idea where my life was going, but this sounded interesting and different. Little did I know how it would impact my life.

The Silva Method claimed to teach you how to do everything from increasing your IQ to developing clairvoyance to finding God. Much of Silva's work has been discredited (see Randi, James. *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural*, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995, and <http://skeptdic.com/silva.html>). But back in '72, certain aspects of the method that I learned provided a path forward for me, and today, at almost 70, I've used what I learned in those classes more times than I can count. Back in '72, I wanted to relax. Viet Nam for me wasn't an awful experience, but living in a war zone nevertheless left me with what was later diagnosed as a milder form of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I wanted to learn how to get my life back, concentrate, grow emotionally, and calm the chaos in my mind.

I was to learn how to go to "alpha" or to "levels" of brainwave activity that would enable us to reach a state of mind that could help us quit smoking, lose weight, and control bodily functions.

To the completely uneducated novice, all of these things sounded plausible and possibly fun, so I decided to work for Charles. It turned out to be one of my better decisions.

At the time, I was smoking three packs of Marlboros a day. A pack in the Army PX was 25 cents—so cheap that many of us became chain smokers overseas. When Charles asked my roommate and me to retrieve his belongings from California, we made a pact to use alpha and help me quit on the long drive to San Francisco and back.

When we would stop for sleep or rest, I would go to levels, dropping into the alpha state, seeing myself on my mental screen enjoying life without cigarettes and reinforcing the idea that I would quit easily without any withdrawal symptoms. I would see myself as healthy and happy. Each day I required fewer and fewer cigarettes as my nicotine desire slowly diminished. By the time we got home 3 weeks later, I was down to five or six cigarettes a day, and a month later I had completely quit.

Life After Cigarettes

Several years later, I had moved on with life and was working as a mortgage loan counselor for a savings and loan in Denver. Practicing alpha each day had a profound effect on my PTSD as I learned how to control the anxiety attacks that came regularly.

We had loan closings almost on a daily basis that were very stressful. Thirty minutes before the closing, I would have an attack and need to breathe into a paper bag to stop hyperventilating. This left me embarrassed, depressed, and struggling with my job. I decided to take a break to enter alpha an hour before a closing. I would breathe deeply and calm myself down, seeing a successful closing and happy customers on my mental screen. The effects were profound. Soon I was calm, collected, and ready to work in ease.

The depression I experienced during this time had left me searching for meaning to life and ways to overcome the sadness I felt. Being gone to war for 2 years was devastating to many of us when we came home. The war was not popular, the public didn't like returning soldiers, and we took the brunt of the social stigma attached to the war. We came home to a different country. Our generation had changed and wasn't the happy-go-lucky group we were in the sixties. Taking time to use alpha regularly helped me to find myself and concentrate on my future with more confidence.

What I Learned

What many people today call meditation was essentially the same thing I was doing with alpha, with one exception. The

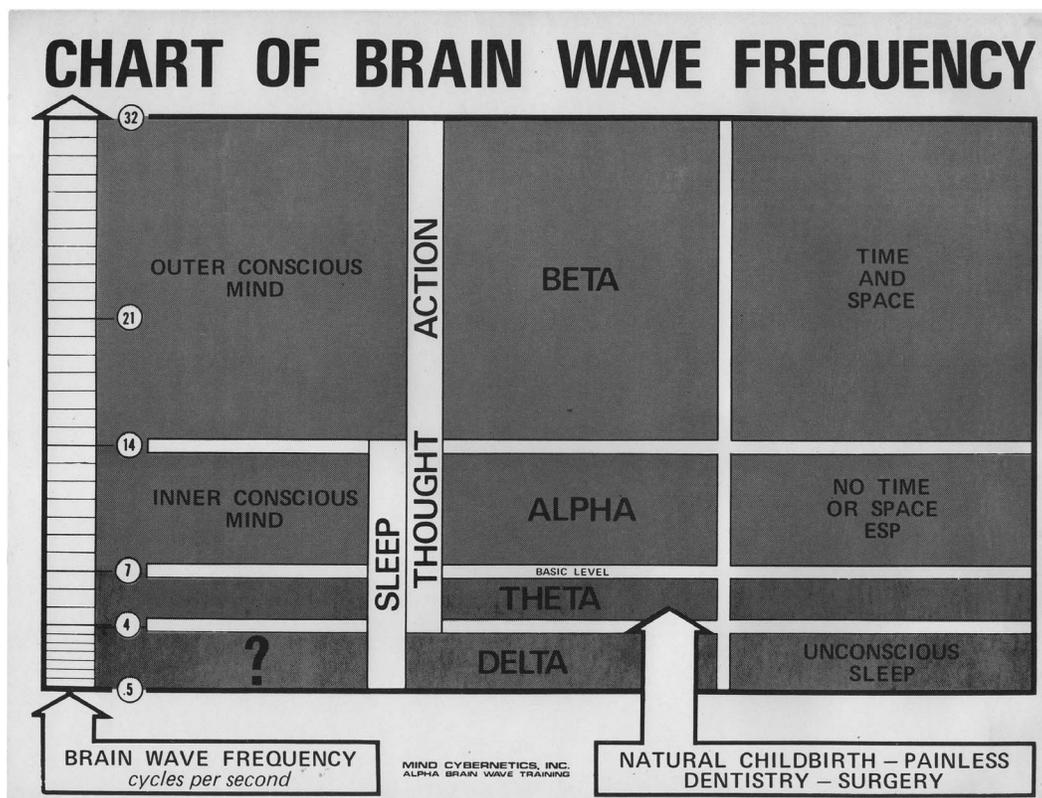


Figure 1. This chart, used with new students, was developed by the company the author worked for in 1973, Mind Cybernetics Inc.

Silva method taught a series of countdowns that enabled the user to feel in control while dropping into lower levels of brainwave activity. I could physically feel my mind and body slowing. In fact, I knew when I was dropping as planned because I would typically yawn at a certain point. Eyes closed, breathing in cadence with my silent mental countdown, and clearing my mind of thoughts allowed me to learn to recognize the level where I could do the most good.

In my initial classes, I learned to create a “workshop in my mind” with two assistants who would be waiting for me. I used an elevator to mimic going down the numbered floors of my countdown. The assistants would greet me and ask me what I needed that day. Their names were Joshua and Jessica and they met my every need. I would be seated in a comfortable reclining chair in front of a screen. I would tell them that I wanted to work on a goal and wanted to see all aspects of the goal on the screen. We would then work together to map out a plan of action, see it implemented, and see a successful outcome realized. I would then return to the elevator and count myself back up to a beta state, take a couple of deep breaths and open

my eyes, feeling fully rested and ready to put my plan into action.

This system has worked for many years for many goals, and helped solve many problems.

Over time, metaphysics began to enter my sphere of interest, along with much self-examination. Many books I read touted other methods to achieve the same goals. The metaphysics study also opened the door for other possibilities and realms of understanding. I experienced one of these one day on a freeway.

Effects of the Alpha State

As the years passed, I became an insurance agent and traveled throughout my city on appointments. I would regularly use the “three-finger technique” to achieve alpha while driving. This is a triggering mechanism where you hold the thumb, index, and middle fingers together while counting down from three. Once my mind realized that this process was for attaining alpha, it allowed for quick entry to that state. Not only did this relax me quickly as I drove through heavy traffic, but it gave me wonderful powers of concentration. While I drove, I would *intend* that my client



Figure 2. The author trekking in the Himalayas in 1993.

would be amenable to my sales pitch, and that I would be effective and accurate in my presentation.

On this particular day, as I dropped quickly into alpha, I noticed that my yawn came quicker than usual and that I felt unusually calm. Then I began to see my surroundings differently and I realized that I was raising up out of my body and floating lightly behind my head. An out-of-body experience was not on my game plan while going 65 miles per hour, but it was happening nonetheless.

I was fully aware that I was driving, but also fully in the moment outside myself. I could see the famous silver cord between me and my physical self. There was no sense of urgency, only a wonderful sense of calm. Then, just as quickly as it began, I was back in my seat, so to speak, and looking down the road. The experience was one that I had read about but never expected to happen to me.

Lost in Nepal

Several years later, I had a similar experience while trekking in the Himalayas of Nepal. Then, as with the first experience, it came on effortlessly and left me energized and happy.

Using the alpha state came in handy in another way while I was in Nepal. I had found myself off course, trekking alone near Kanchenjunga. I was trying to find a small town called Taplejung. By my third day, I realized I was definitely lost. I had started looking for food and shelter for the night when three men found me sitting on a ridge top. They offered to take me to a relative's home to spend the night and I could go to Taplejung with them the next day.

We arrived at a small enclave of huts that I thought was our destination, so I sat down to repair the many blisters on my feet. I was just finishing with my last Band-Aid when

they came back to me to share that we would be staying in a different home a few hundred yards down the path. Night had fallen, and I was using a headlamp to see in the dark. I didn't want to put my boots back on sore feet, so I put on my flip-flops, figuring that we only had a short way to go.

After a few moments, I could see a kerosene lantern burning on a front porch up ahead. The house sat on one of a series of landscaped terraces. There was a rock wall that we had to climb to get up to the home. I watched as each of the three men stepped on the rocks sticking out of the wall, which made a staircase of sorts. I stepped up on the first one with my right foot, but when I raised my left foot up to take the second step, I scraped my big toe on the side of the rock and ripped a big gash in it. Searing pain ran through my body, and I was very afraid that I had done some severe damage to myself.

I quickly moved to the bench where the lantern was, took my pack off, sat down, and raised my foot up on my right leg. There was blood everywhere, and it was almost spurting. Fear took over. My mouth went dry, and the world closed in on me. I had a rectangular flap of skin hanging by one side, so I replaced it where it should have been and clamped down hard with my right hand to stop the flow of blood. It hurt so bad that I threw up; for a moment I thought I was going to pass out.

I grabbed my first aid kit from the top of my pack and opened it. I also pulled out one of my water bottles and took a big drink. As I let the pain subside, holding my toe tightly, I took a deep breath and tried to reach alpha. During times of fear and distress, this is very difficult. I kept trying until I felt my heart rate begin to slow down to normal. Then, in my mind, I tried to find the pressure point in my groin to slow the flow of blood to my leg. For the life of me I couldn't mentally see it, so I changed targets and tried to apply mental pressure to the one behind my left knee.

We had been taught in class to use pressure points to ease pain and slow bleeding, and it began to work. I fell into a calmer state, but kept a measured breathing. I poured water over the wound, took some gauze out of the first aid kit, and cleaned the blood away. I knew immediately that it was going to require stitches. I had only a small sewing kit, and it was going to have to do. I took a few moments to use the three-finger technique to fully enter alpha to handle the pain.

I gave myself five stitches and threw up one more time, but the pain was better and the bleeding stopped. I applied Merthiolate, which stung like crazy, and finished with the bandages. The rest of my trek was uncomfortable, but I could continue.

Conclusion

Today, I still use alpha to meditate, to think through issues, to relax, and to go to sleep at night. It's similar to the feeling you have just before you fall asleep at night. Or when you are very relaxed on vacation looking at the ocean. Your mind is at ease and quiet, your heart rate slows, as does your breathing, and all is well in your world. For me this is also brought on with gratitude; I'm a big believer in being grateful for our many blessings. Gratitude opens your mind and heart to be in the moment and filled with love. This is the feeling of "alpha."

The simple formula taught to me over 40 years ago is as valid now as it was back then. I've never used a biofeedback machine to measure my brainwave activity and see how deep I go, but maybe I will someday. My creativity and imagination are as good as when I was younger because of this practice, and for that I'm very grateful. I've become a professional speaker and use this system to calm my nerves before a presentation. There are many uses for "alpha training," and I urge you to explore some of them in your life.

Reference website for the three-finger technique: <http://www.silvailtraminsystem.com/testimonials/meditation-techniques>

Articles on my website about using breathing, meditation, and intention: <http://keithrenninson.com/how-often-do-you-rely-on-your-intuition/>; <http://keithrenninson.com/success-through-intention/>

About my new book where I describe how I gave myself stitches: *Tenacity: You Don't Have to Get Lost in Nepal to Find Yourself, But It Helps!*: <http://keithrenninson.com/books/>



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