

INTO THE MAGIC SHOP: READERS' GUIDE QUESTIONS

I. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REFLECTION BY CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

- 1. How would you describe the language used by the author to talk with and explain his surgery to his four-year old patient?**
- 2. The emergency that resulted from the surgery assistant's error was dramatic. When the author described calming his mind, relaxing his body and visualizing the bleeding blood vessel that has disappeared from view, what was going through your mind?**

CHAPTER 1

- 1. Do you agree with Ruth that people are usually distracted by the past, or the future, and not really thinking about the present? If yes, why do you think this is so?**
- 2. Ruth offered to teach Jim a different kind of magic, the kind that could change his life, and (he tells us in advance), it did. What is your reaction to this?**

CHAPTER 2

- 1. The author states that the brain has great "plasticity" and can change and transform. Do you believe this is possible and that it is a good discovery? Why or why not?**
- 2. Have you ever felt or can you relate to Jim's statement that "sometimes the pain of those around you makes you invisible"?**
- 3. Do you agree that learning to relax your body is important? If so, what is a recent situation when it would have been good for you to do this?**
- 4. Practice Ruth's Trick #1**

CHAPTER 3

- 1. Can you recognize the voices in your own head, as Jim began to recognize his? Can you see that the “real you” is the listener and not the voice?**
- 2. Ruth says that the mind can be tamed. What do you think about this idea? Do you think it would improve your life if you were able to do this?**
- 3. Ruth gave Jim three ways to tame his thoughts-following his breath, watching a candle flame and chanting a mantra to himself. Have you tried any of these? If not, would you be willing to try one or all?**
- 4. Practice Ruth’s Trick #2**

CHAPTER 4

- 1. Think of the “playlist” of ten affirmations that Ruth asked Jim to repeat every morning and every night (and any time it popped into his head). Can you say these to yourself with sincere feeling?**
- 2. Do you know from experience the truth of the statement “those who hurt people are often those who hurt the most”? Does recognizing this help you send more loving thoughts toward those you don’t like or approve of?**
- 3. Why do you think that Ruth said that opening the heart is “the most important part” of her teachings?**
- 4. Practice Ruth’s Trick #3**

CHAPTER 5

- 1. Jim was the one in his family who had to “keep it together” at age 12. Do you know any young person in your family or any other family who plays or played this role? How hard is or was that?**
- 2. Do you think it would help you achieve a goal to clarify your intent about that goal?**

3. "It is your thoughts that create your reality. Others can create your reality only if you don't create it yourself." What are your thoughts about these statements?

4. Practice Ruth's Trick #4

CHAPTER 6

1. Jim practiced Ruth's tricks daily, except for one of them, opening the heart. That trick was difficult for him. How do you react to his feelings or beliefs about why this was so?
2. Jim got accepted into college. His practice of Ruth's magic tricks to that point had lasted about 6 years. How had he changed in that time?
3. "When our brain changes, we change. When our heart changes, everything changes." What does this paired statement mean to you now?

CHAPTER 7

1. Jim was told he had no chance to go to medical school, yet he convinced the pre-med committee to recommend him. How would you explain how he made this happen?
2. He was then accepted into Tulane's medical school despite being three courses short on biology electives, and following medical school, he got the neurosurgery residency he wanted despite great odds. Can you identify with having such a strong vision about yourself and who you could become?

CHAPTER 8

1. Jim became arrogant and felt invincible. He stopped practicing Ruth's teachings. Why do you think this happened?
2. He had a near death experience (NDE) during his residency after being involved in a serious car accident. How would you describe his greatest learnings from that experience?

CHAPTER 9

1. Once worth about 75 million dollars, Jim created an irrevocable trust for charitable donation but within a few weeks was bankrupt and in debt. What are your feelings about this turn in his fortunes?

2. Though he lost his fortune and lifestyle, he still had his notebook with Ruth's teachings and began to reconnect to them.

What do you think he had in mind by returning to Lancaster that same day?

CHAPTER 10

1. Jim realized that he didn't follow Ruth's instruction to open his heart before visualizing what he wanted. Have you ever thought you wanted something and later found that you had not checked in with your heart?
2. Receiving a call that his trust documents had not been finalized, Jim received the chance to recover those funds for his own use. He opened his heart and decided to "donate everything as planned". What is your reaction to his decision?
3. "The mind wants to divide and keep us separate." "The heart wants to connect us and wants to share." Consider and/or discuss these two statements.
4. Of all of Ruth's teachings, her time and attention (or compassion) was the greatest gift and greatest magic for Jim. Is compassion a gift you have truly received or given? If so, recall specific examples and how you have felt as a giver and a receiver.

CHAPTER 11

1. Back at Stanford to study the role of kindness and compassion on health, Jim created a mnemonic called the alphabet of the heart and practiced it daily. Are there certain parts of the alphabet that you especially like?
2. Do you plan to integrate any or all of the alphabet into a practice to begin your day with powerful intention and purpose?

CHAPTER 12

1. There were many questions that sparked Jim's interest in studying compassion. Which of the research findings about compassion reported in this chapter are most surprising or interesting to you?

2. He visualized having the Dalai Lama visit Stanford. This happened, and the visit led to an unprecedented financial contribution to begin the center (CCARE). What dreams is Jim realizing in this chapter?

CHAPTER 13

1. Like the Dalai Lama, Jim chooses kindness as his religion. How do you reconcile kindness with the usual definition of religion?
2. “We are at the beginning of an age of compassion”, Jim writes. Do you believe like he does that this ripple could become a powerful force?
3. How might our society and the world be different if/when this vision of Jim’s is manifested?

INTO THE MAGIC SHOP: READERS' GUIDE QUESTIONS

II. QUESTIONS FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION OR REFLECTION OF OVERALL BOOK

- 1. What attracted you to reading this book?**
- 2. In practicing relaxing your body and quieting your mind by focusing on your breath, what do you find most challenging and most beneficial?**
- 3. Do you find it difficult to open your heart? Why or why not?**
- 4. If the practices taught by Ruth and discussed by Dr. Doty are so powerful and effective, why do you think they are not more universally practiced?**
- 5. Do the practices resemble anything that you are already doing in your life that has similar effects in relaxing your body, quieting your mind or opening your heart?**
- 6. How aligned do you feel with the deepest truths about yourself?**
- 7. Have you ever tried clarifying your intent? What were the results?**
- 8. Have there been times in your life when a vision of what could be has sustained you? If your vision became reality, who or what helped you realize your dreams?**
- 9. What do you identify in your life as factors that prevent you from having the life experience that you wish for?**
- 10. What do you feel about the power of compassion to change your brain, your life, others' lives and the world?**

11. How do you think you can carry the lessons from this book into your life?

INTO THE MAGIC SHOP: FURTHER INSIGHTS

III. QUESTIONS FOR THE AUTHOR FROM CURIOUS READERS/ ANSWERS FROM DR. DOTY

1. Chris, the girl from your apartment building appeared during your NDE. Did you ever ask her out or get to know her?

Yes, I did ask her out and did get to know her, but I was embarrassed that she was Hispanic and very insecure because of my family situation.

2. Once you learned to manifest your desires so skillfully, were there any situations where you wished you had not been successful?

No.

3. Were there any situations that you thought you could handle with your skills that you did not succeed at? If so, how did you react or learn from that?

Many situations I was unprepared for although I had confidence. This is the nature of life in general. Fortunately, the tools that Ruth taught me allowed me to sit with the feelings from the experience and not have them destroy me....it allowed me to learn from them by processing what happened without beating myself up.

4. Did you ever question the enormous gift you had been given by Ruth as such a young person or feel it was too much responsibility?

I really didn't understand the nature of the gift I had received until much later.

5. At one time you felt you would like to be a children's plastic surgeon. Have you channeled your passion for children into any of your current activities?

I did a pediatric neurosurgery fellowship and for many years treated children and was chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Children's Hospital in Orange County. I still have a soft spot for children.

6. How did your family and friends relate to your learnings?

I still connected to my family, but the nature of my world and experience was so different that it became more difficult as there was less and less commonality and primarily a family connection more than anything else. My family has/had great

appreciation of what I accomplished and are very proud, but my world is foreign to them.

7. What have you learned (besides keeping in mind to keep your heart open) that might help others avoid the magic malfunction?

It may not always be possible to avoid, regardless of what one says. Each of us is at a different place, and the nature of this reality makes each of our paths different. "The teacher appears when the student is ready"...the student learns the lesson when his/her mind is ready.

8. For others who also feel and hope that we are in the beginning of an age of compassion, can you share your expectations about how the ripple will become a tsunami? Will it continue to build one kind act at a time or do you think that there will be an exponential change at some critical mass?

I think it will happen one act at a time, but at some point there will be a critical mass and everything then will change.