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One of the concepts we discussed in our course was epistemology – How Do I *Know* What I Believe. In my experience, when I know or believe something deeply, I feel it in my bones and in my gut. There are three situations when I've felt this. The first is in a peak experience, for example, swimming in the ocean with the sun setting in the water. I felt as though my body and mind were vibrating in harmony with the nature surrounding me.

Neuroscience has demonstrated that brain waves can be in a lesser or greater degree of harmony at different times, and the individual can have some control of this. Peak experiences just come upon you. The other two situations when I've felt this are more in my control.

Mindfulness meditation and psychoanalysis, while coming from vastly different traditions, are, at their core, very similar. In both, the practitioner witnesses, *without censorship*, his thoughts, emotions, and impulses, as they rise and fall spontaneously. The ultimate goal is to be comfortable with *all* the contents of your mind, both good and dark. Nature itself is both good and dark. Consider volcanoes and earthquakes, and a lioness making her kill. Sometimes I believe religion is humankind's quest to focus on and create goodness and beauty in the world, while knowing that nature can also destroy. In mindfulness and psychoanalysis, as you allow into consciousness thoughts that have, until then, caused anxiety, and accept them as part of yourself, the conflict and the noise dissipate, and harmony fills in the space.

The third way I've felt this deep knowing: When I am confused about something in my life, I pray that when I wake up in the morning, I'll have greater clarity about it. Usually, it works. My mind is relaxed and I have a much clearer idea about what to do.

I mentioned the study about brain waves. Is there more backing from science for my beliefs? Quoting from [A Short History of Nearly Everything](#), by Bill Bryson, the universe is made of atoms. "The basic working arrangement of atoms is the molecule. ... One cubic centimeter of air (about the size of a sugar cube) contains 45 billion billion molecules." Imagine how many molecules are in your body; in this sanctuary; in the universe.

There's a lot of flow between the molecules in your self and the world around you. You breathe in, and the molecules that were outside your body are now in your lungs, the oxygen attaches to your red blood cells, circulates through your body, gets transformed to keep you alive, and you exhale carbon dioxide back into the universe.

Moreover, atoms are mostly empty space, and the particles that comprise them are in constant vibration, constant energy. *We* are mostly empty space, a packet of energy that somehow stays together for our lifetimes, yet exchanging molecules with, and sharing vibrations with, the universe. So our 7<sup>th</sup> Unitarian Universalist principle, "respecting the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part" is not just a pretty, poetic sentiment, but scientific fact.

So, I believe what is happening when we know something deeply is that we are vibrating in harmony within ourselves and with the world around us.

A final word about this. When I pray, I usually begin, "Dear God." And when I'm clearer in the morning, I find myself saying, "Thank you, God." I wonder why the word,

God comes so spontaneously to my lips. I think partly because it's ingrained in my personal and collective unconscious, and partly because the word, God, gives me a feeling of warmth that other words or phrases, such as Universe or Ground of all Being, don't.

Some people believe that the universe is random. I believe that there is a cosmic order. We can't know it to describe it because in order to describe something, we have to get outside it and observe it. And we can't because we're a part of it. But we can *know* it from the inside by feeling in harmony with it. We may find it difficult or impossible to put into words, but it is an *experience* of knowing. And it's a marvelous experience. We feel connected to everything and because of that, everything feels familiar and warm.