

Connections between Our Books

Our books all aim at expanding consciousness and freeing the human spirit from limiting conditioning and beliefs. Each explores the human condition and offers different approaches to personal and social evolution. *The Passionate Mind*'s primary focus is delving into one's inner world. *The Guru Papers* and *The Passionate Mind Revisited* change and deepen the inner inquiry by incorporating genetic and other conditioning related to worldviews, morality, and culture.

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The Passionate Mind: *A Manual for Living Creatively with One's Self* Joel Kramer (1974)

The Passionate Mind takes readers on a journey of discovery into the workings of the mind. These early talks by Joel draw one into self-exploration as a living inner inquiry that can be done alone or in relationship. To this day people tell us the book has been a life-changing touchstone for them. It contains many elements that our later books develop further. It was partly through Krishnamurti that Joel realized our human capacity for self-reflexivity can be used to see how thought filters and biases perception. Mental filters affect emotions and shape experiences. Seeing the mind's mechanical aspects can bring a shift of awareness that alters the experiencing process. Breaking out of thought's limitations and subjective filters allows one to freshly meet the new.

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The Guru Papers: *Masks of Authoritarian Power* Joel Kramer & Diana Alstad (1993; ebook 2012)

Exposing the dynamics of manipulation and how cultural factors cage the mind is a doorway to freeing the mind. *The Guru Papers* shows why people give up their power and how others take it. The book deciphers how people are conditioned by external influences and by belief systems that contain disguised authoritarianism. Chapters depicting the insidious nature of authoritarianism in oneself and in daily life suggest new approaches to resolving or alleviating difficulties with inner conflict, addiction, and intimacy.

Part 1, "Personal Masks," examines how people are seduced and manipulated. It uses the traditional guru/disciple relationship—the most extreme example of one person's power over another—to illustrate the dynamics of control writ large. This helps reveal less obvious occurrences. "Guru" can be a metaphor for anyone who is unchallengeable and manipulates others under the guise of "knowing what's best."

Part 2, "Ideological Masks," examines how power is taken and maintained by controlling minds and why people are susceptible to manipulation. Beneath the visible authoritarianism in politics, social structures, and personalities is a far more pervasive, covert mental authoritarianism; it's hidden in morality, worldviews, and traditional spiritual frameworks. This age-old "social virus" has been part of the structural weave holding societies together. It's still a prevalent means of social control surreptitiously interwoven and concealed in many aspects of life. Basic problems, both personal and global, are tied to authoritarian beliefs so entrenched they are taken for granted.

From an early age, people are subjected to authoritarian conditioning that gets embedded in the way we think and in the very morality we try to live by—or react against. Once internalized, this programming generates an “inner authoritarian” that becomes intertwined with self-control. This often leads to inner conflict or obsessive drivenness; it also justifies the self-righteous control of others. Unlivable ideals adulating “selfless purity” can undermine self-trust and generate guilt. Self-mistrust induces people to give their power away and look to others for answers, meaning, and even “salvation.”

Becoming conscious of how an authoritarian “virus” lives in us helps to disempower it, freeing untapped potential. Authoritarianism is a real obstacle to meeting rapidly escalating challenges because it blocks information and necessary changes. Awareness of the veiled authoritarian underpinnings of much social and self-control can unleash the intelligence and creativity urgently needed for these times. When people take back their power, it opens new realms of possibility and more grounds for hope.

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The Passionate Mind Revisited: Expanding Personal and Social Awareness **Joel Kramer & Diana Alstad (2009; ebook 2013)**

The Passionate Mind Revisited is a total re-visioning of Joel’s original book thirty-five years later from different contemporary vantage points, deepening awareness of ourselves and the human condition. While *The Passionate Mind* focuses on how thought, belief, fear, and desire can condition and limit us, the new coauthored book includes their evolutionary functions as well as drawbacks. Incorporating new findings about the brain and our nature as a self-reflective, thinking, talking social species broadens the inquiry. Understanding better what in our complex makeup brought humanity to its perilous situation and where our potential lies can help reveal the nature of our challenges and how to meet them.

The new book also extends the inquiry from the personal to social arenas, worldviews, global concerns, and evolution. Humanity’s problems stem partially from deep-seated social conditioning and limiting beliefs. Worldviews are primary lenses influencing perception that underlie beliefs, values, identities, and much behavior. They affect the nature of the social fabric and how we treat each other and our planet. Dysfunctional worldviews based on dogma, outdated beliefs, or magical thinking are serious obstacles to creating a more humane and viable world.

“Otherworldly” spirituality needs to be reframed to focus on this world and this lifetime. Traditional spiritual worldviews generally don’t address the quandaries of power, gender, genes, and socio-political realities. Bringing spirituality down to Earth by connecting and taking into account these arenas that are typically kept separate creates a more inclusive, realistic, and relevant worldview. This better captures where we humans find ourselves and supports us by promoting social evolution—a key to thriving and surviving.

“Where we are as a species is an expression of who we are and have been—not who we can be. Developmentally, humanity’s current precarious state represents our adolescence, not our essence. The evolutionary factors that made humanity successful are now putting us and other species at risk, forcing us to evolve personally and socially. This involves developing our extraordinary social potential by examining what in our nature, beliefs, and institutions is propelling us toward non-viability. Seeing clearly what works for us and what doesn’t has its own evolutionary momentum. The driving force within evolution lives in each of us—offering hope. By enlarging our capacity to become conscious participants in the process that made us, we take our fate more into our own hands.”

—From the “**Evolution**” chapter in the “**Map of the Book**” for *The Passionate Mind Revisited**

* The “**Map**” of *The Passionate Mind Revisited* is in the e-book & on the blog at joeldiana.com.