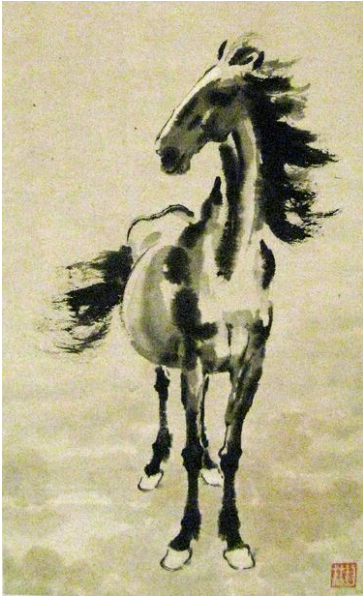
A blue-tinted photograph of a mountain range reflected in a lake, with a bear paw print in the foreground. The text is overlaid in the center.

Naikan  
Reflection  
For the  
New Year

**S**elf-reflection is beautifully suited to the New Year. Many of us are naturally inclined toward introspection and reflection at this time. There may be a poignant



awareness of the losses and struggles that occurred, as well as an appreciation of our good fortune in celebrating the start of yet another year.

It is a time for looking back with a wide-angle lens at that which has already been written, as well as looking ahead toward the clean, blank slate of possibilities.

The reflections and exercises in this book may inform our decisions and choices in the year ahead, helping us to live in a more deliberate and thoughtful way than we might otherwise do.

Let's pause and see what we can learn from the special vantage point that we have access to at this time of year.

*We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.*

--Thornton Wilder

Some of the following reflections are based on Naikan. We invite you to spend some time with the three questions of Naikan to see what you can discover.

*The Naikan questions are:*

*What did you receive from \_\_\_\_\_?*

*What did you give to \_\_\_\_\_?*

*What troubles and difficulties did you cause \_\_\_\_\_?*

You may decide to work on this process a little each day, from now until the New Year, or you may decide to devote some special time on New Year's Eve and/or New Year's Day to explore them all.

This journal can serve as a place to capture your thoughts and observations, hopefully bringing about some closure to the past year and clearing a path for the adventures that are about to unfold.

However you proceed, we send you our very best wishes as you approach the beginning of another year. May we all recognize the web of support that has enabled us to live, up until this moment, and that will continue to sustain us for the rest of our "thirty thousand days".

*In between birth and death everything I have is a gift – my body, the clothes I wear, the knowledge I have, family and friends, hobbies I enjoy, the house I live in, and so on. They are all "mine", but only as things temporarily entrusted to me during my sojourn on earth.*

-- Rev. Taitetsu Unno

**Write down your five primary roles in life (parent, partner, adult child, sibling, employee, friend, volunteer, citizen, etc.) Consider what is most important for you to do, in relation to each of these roles, in the year ahead.**

**1. Role of:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

**2. Role of:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

**3. Role of:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

**4. Role of:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

**5. Role of:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

**Reflection on:** \_\_\_\_\_

Do Naikan on someone who has been particularly supportive to you during the past year. Keep your reflections focused on what transpired just during the past year.

Received: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Gave: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Troubles and Difficulties: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Reflect on your speech this past year.**

**In what ways have you spoken critically or harmfully to others?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**In what ways have you spoken negatively or inappropriately about others who were not present?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**How has your speech caused worry, upset or harm?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**What have you learned this past year? Who taught you?  
Make a list of all the people and objects that helped you to  
learn and grow, personally, professionally, and spiritually.**

**Practical skills:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal development:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Professional development:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Spiritual growth:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I  
may learn how to do it.*

-- Pablo Picasso





**Reflect on your role as a citizen and community member.**

What have you received from others?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What have you given to others?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What troubles or difficulties have you caused others?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Rather than a genuine sense of appreciation  
for what we have, we focus on how our circumstances  
fall short of those who have more.*

*– Gregg Krech*

List 18 things you've received this past year, without providing any compensation – things you've borrowed, stole, inhaled, absorbed, enjoyed, witnessed, touched, heard, read, tasted . . .

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



11. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

**Reflection on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do Naikan reflection on someone with whom you've had difficulty during the past year. It can be challenging to shift our attention to these questions when we are upset or angry, but it's an important exercise that has the potential to be transformational.**

**Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Gave:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Troubles and Difficulties:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*“Expressing gratitude is transformative, just as transformative as expressing complaint. Imagine an experiment involving two people. One is asked to spend ten minutes each morning and evening expressing gratitude (there is always something to be grateful for), while the other is asked to spend the same amount of time practicing complaining (there is, after all, always something to complain about). One of the subjects is saying things like, “I hate my job, I can’t stand this apartment. Why can’t I make enough money? My spouse doesn’t get along with me. That dog next door never stops barking and I just can’t stand this neighborhood.”*

*The other is saying things like, “I’m really grateful for the opportunity to work; there are so many people these days who can’t even find a job. And I’m sure grateful for my health. What a gorgeous day; I really like this fall breeze.” They do this experiment for a year. Guaranteed, at the end of that year the person practicing complaining will have deeply reaffirmed all his negative stuff rather than having let it go, while the one practicing gratitude will be a very grateful person. What you practice is what you are; practice and the goal of practice are identical, cause and effect are one reality. Expressing gratitude can, indeed, change our way of seeing ourselves and the world.”*

*- John Daido Looi Roshi*

**Send notes and/or gifts of appreciation to those who have been kind to you during the past year, and who have supported you with their time, effort, or money.**

Keep track of your gestures of appreciation here:

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

*But really, what on earth does the world owe you when it comes down to it? Absolutely nothing. Everything is given to you. Even the fact that you are here is a gift. You didn't bring yourself here, you didn't buy this life. How did you get here? It's all a gift.*

– Brother David Steindl Rast

Select an accomplishment from the past year to reflect upon:

---

What did you receive from others in order to succeed in this accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

What did you give to others as a result of this accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

What troubles or difficulties did you cause others while working toward this accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Sometimes I go about in pity for myself, and all the while a great wind is bearing me across the sky.*



*Puffed up by our self-will, we look out at the world through the distorting medium of our likes and dislikes, hopes and fears, and opinions and judgments. We want everyone to behave as we think they should -- the right way. When, naturally enough, they not only behave their own way, but expect us to do as they do, we get agitated. And what we see through this agitation makes up our everyday reality.*

-- Eknath Easwaran



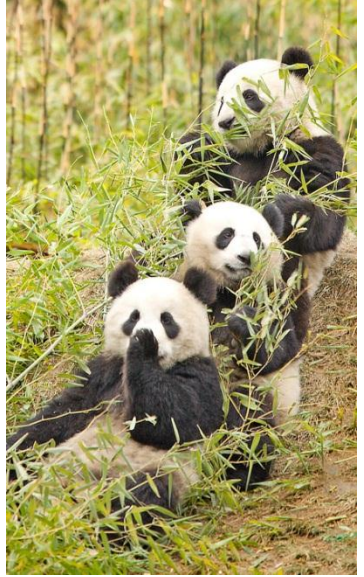
*Grow more and more in gratitude and thankfulness; let it become your very style. Be grateful to everybody. If one understands gratitude, then one is grateful for things that have been one positively. And one even feels grateful for things that could have been done but were not one. You feel grateful that somebody helped you - this is just the beginning. Then you start feeling grateful that somebody has not harmed you - he could have; it was kind of him not to. Once you understand the feeling of gratitude and allow it to sink deeply within you, you will start feeling grateful for everything. And the more grateful you are, the less complaining, rumbling. Once complaining disappears, misery disappears. It exists with complaints. It is hooked with complaints and with the complaining mind. Misery is impossible with gratefulness. This is one of the most important secrets to learn.*

-- Osho

## *Don't Expect Applause*

**W**hat this slogan means is  
*don't expect thanks . .*

*More than expect thanks, it  
would be helpful just to expect  
the unexpected; then you  
might be curious and  
inquisitive about what comes*

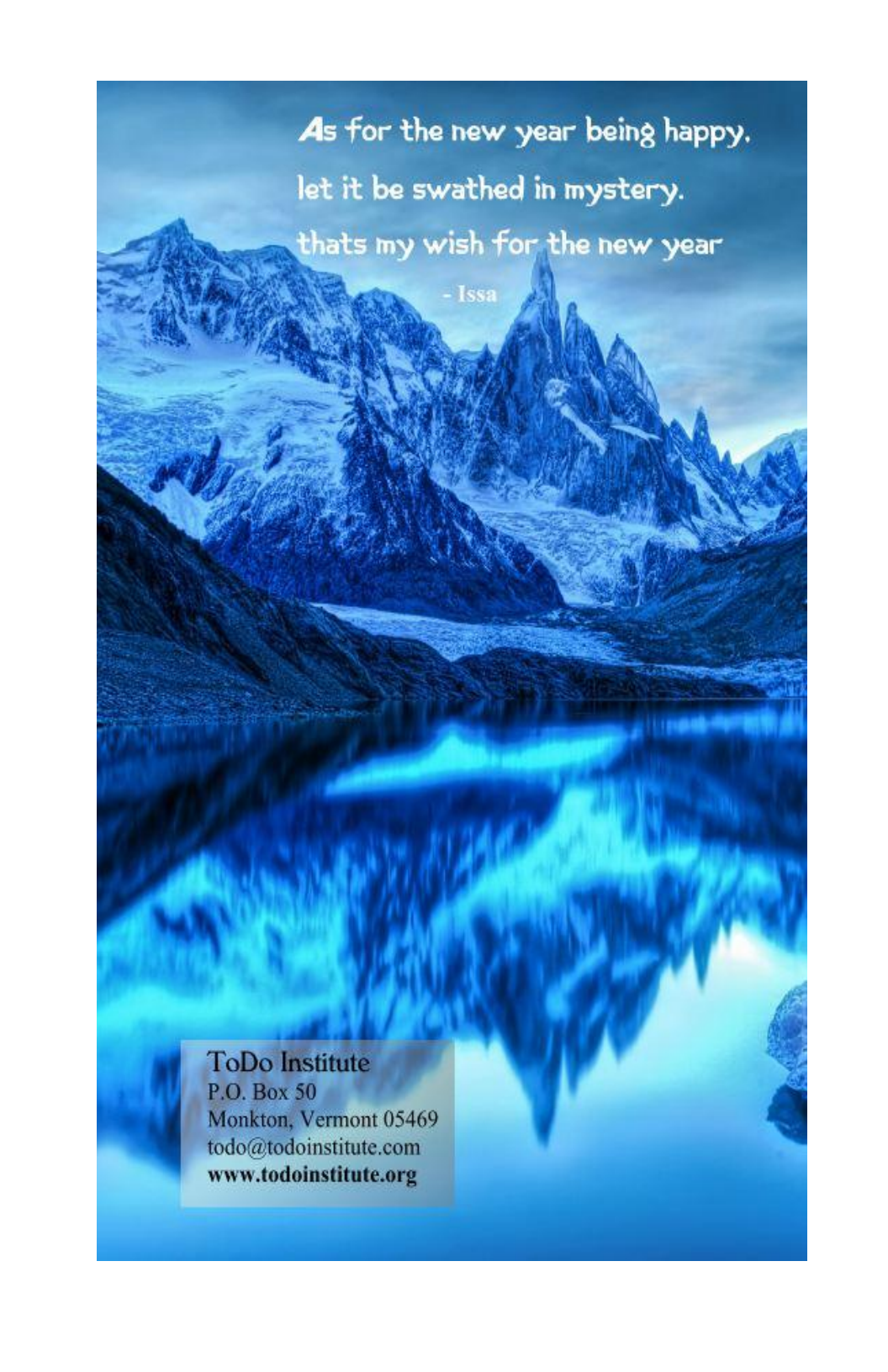


*in the door. We can begin to open our hearts to  
others when we have no hope of getting anything  
back. We just do it for its own sake. We can thank  
others, but we should give up all hope of getting  
thanked in return. Simply keep the door open  
without expectations.*

*- Pema Chodron*

*Produced by  
The ToDo Institute  
P.O. Box 50 Monkton, Vermont 05469  
(802) 453-4440 [todo@todoinstitute.com](mailto:todo@todoinstitute.com)*

*©2010 by the ToDo Institute. All Rights Reserved.  
Please do not duplicate any part of this booklet with receiving  
permission from us. Thank you.*



As for the new year being happy,  
let it be swathed in mystery.  
that's my wish for the new year

- Issa

**ToDo Institute**  
P.O. Box 50  
Monkton, Vermont 05469  
[todo@todoinstitute.com](mailto:todo@todoinstitute.com)  
[www.todoinstitute.org](http://www.todoinstitute.org)