

Personal Power: A Huna Perspective on Choice, Control and Living More Fully

By Pete Dalton



There are moments when life seems to be happening to us rather than with us. Someone says something that upsets us. Plans fall apart. An opportunity disappears. We find ourselves worrying about something we cannot change, or frustrated with another person because they are not behaving as we would like. At times like these it can be very easy to feel that our wellbeing depends on the outside world becoming different.

This raises an interesting question. Where, exactly, is our power?

We often associate power with being able to make things happen. The powerful person is the one who gets their way, influences events or has control over circumstances. From a Huna perspective, though, personal power can be understood differently. It is less about controlling life and more about increasing our capacity to choose within life.

That may sound like a small distinction, but in practice it can change quite a lot.

Power Is Not the Same as Control

There are enormous parts of life we cannot control. We cannot completely control other people. We cannot guarantee that our plans will succeed. We cannot prevent unexpected events. We cannot rewrite yesterday. And however carefully we plan tomorrow, life retains an impressive ability to surprise us.

If our sense of power depends upon controlling these things, we are going to feel powerless rather often.

But there is another kind of power available to us. We can become more aware of what we focus upon. We can question the meanings we give to events. We can notice the stories we tell ourselves. We can become clearer about what we value and what we want. We can choose what we do next. And sometimes, with practice, we can discover that even our emotional responses contain more flexibility than we had assumed.

This does not mean pretending that difficult things are easy. Nor does it mean blaming ourselves for everything that happens to us. It simply means becoming curious about where some choice might still exist.

That is a very Huna way of approaching personal power.

Mana: Power Comes From Within

One of the Seven Principles of Huna is *Mana*, often expressed as “all power comes from within”. This can easily be misunderstood. It does not mean that external circumstances do not matter. Clearly they do. Money, health, relationships, opportunities, other people’s decisions and simple good or bad fortune can all influence our lives enormously.

Mana points our attention somewhere else. It asks us not to give away all our power to those circumstances.

Imagine two people waiting to hear whether they have been offered a job. Neither can control the employer’s decision. One spends the next two days repeatedly checking their email and imagining rejection. The other notices the same anxiety but decides to hold a positive expectation, go for a walk, enjoy dinner with a friend and perhaps begin looking at another interesting opportunity.

Neither controls the outcome. But they are exercising their personal power differently.

Personal power begins to appear when we stop asking only, “How can I make this situation do what I want?” and also ask, “Given the situation as it is, what choices are available to me now?”

Now Is the Moment of Power

This leads naturally to another Huna principle, *Manawa*: now is the moment of power.

The past can influence us enormously. The future deserves thought and preparation. But the only place from which we can actually do anything is now. We remember the past now. We imagine the future now. We make choices now.

This can be particularly useful when we notice ourselves caught in an old story. Perhaps something went badly several years ago and part of us concluded, “I’m not very good at this”, “I always mess things up”, “People like me don’t do things like that” or “I’m just not confident”.

The original event may have happened years ago, but the story is being experienced in the present. And that means the possibility of relating to it differently also exists in the present.

We do not have to pretend the past was different. We can simply ask whether the meaning we have carried forward from it is still useful. Perhaps “I failed” can gradually

become “I tried something difficult and learned from it”. The facts need not change for our relationship with them to change.

Notice Where Your Attention Goes

Huna also gives considerable importance to *Makia*, usually expressed as “energy flows where attention goes”. Our attention is one of the ways in which we continually shape our experience.

Think about walking through a familiar neighbourhood. On one day you notice litter, traffic, potholes and the person who nearly walks into you while staring at their phone. On another day you notice blossom appearing on a tree, somebody laughing outside a café and an unexpectedly beautiful patch of evening sky.

It is the same neighbourhood. Neither version is necessarily false. The difference is partly attention.

This matters because attention has habits. We can become very skilled at noticing evidence for our fears, inadequacies and disappointments. Once we have a story about ourselves, our attention can become remarkably efficient at finding evidence to support it.

Personal power includes becoming aware of this process. Not so that we have to “think positively” all the time, but so that our attention becomes something we use more consciously.

Personal Power Can Be Gentle

There is another important element here. Power can sound hard. We talk about willpower, discipline, pushing through, taking control and making things happen. Yet Huna also places *Aloha*, love, at the heart of an empowered life.

This suggests something interesting. Perhaps becoming more powerful does not necessarily require becoming harder on ourselves. It may require the opposite.

We often imagine that criticism motivates change. We tell ourselves, “I really need to sort myself out”, “I should be better than this” or “Why do I always do that?” But self-disapproval can consume an extraordinary amount of energy.

Self-approval offers another possibility. This does not mean believing that everything we do is wonderful. We can approve of ourselves while deciding that something we have done was unhelpful. We can love ourselves and still want to change.

There is a profound difference between saying, “I need to change because there is something wrong with me” and saying, “I’m okay as I am, and I’d like to explore another way of being.”

The second can be a surprisingly powerful place from which to begin.

More Power Can Mean More Possibilities

Perhaps one of the simplest ways of thinking about personal power is that power increases as our sense of possibility increases.

When we feel powerless, life often appears narrow. We say, "I have no choice", "This is just how I am", "Nothing can be done", "They made me feel this way" or "It has to be like this".

Sometimes our options genuinely are limited. Huna does not require us to deny reality. But sometimes there are choices we simply have not noticed yet.

There may be a different interpretation, a different response, a conversation, a boundary, a request for help, a decision not to respond immediately, a change in where we put our attention, or a willingness to let something go. Perhaps the only available choice is to sit quietly for five minutes before deciding what to do next.

Personal power does not always arrive dramatically. Sometimes it appears as one additional possibility. And one additional possibility can be enough to change what happens next.

Practices to Try

One simple practice is to ask yourself, when you feel stuck, "What can I choose here?" You do not need to find a brilliant answer. Simply look for choices. If nothing else, you may be able to choose where you place your attention for the next few minutes.

You might also notice your "no choice" language. Listen for phrases such as "I have to", "I can't", "I've got no choice" or "That's just the way I am". You do not need to stop saying them. Just become curious and ask, "Is that completely true?" Sometimes it will be. Sometimes you may discover a little more freedom than you thought.

Another useful experiment is to notice where your attention has been going. If something is troubling you, ask yourself whether there are other aspects of the situation you have not been noticing. This is not about denying the problem. It is about widening the picture.

And from time to time, you might simply ask, "What would I like to experience next?" Perhaps peace, curiosity, connection, fun, confidence or rest. Then ask, "What small thing could I do now that might move me in that direction?" Personal power often becomes real through very ordinary actions.

Living More Fully

From a Huna perspective, personal power is not about becoming invulnerable. It is not about controlling everyone around us, getting everything we want or maintaining some permanently positive state.

It is about developing a different relationship with ourselves and with life. We become more aware of where our attention goes. We become curious about the beliefs and stories through which we interpret experience. We learn to treat ourselves with greater approval and kindness. We become clearer about what matters to us. We act where we can act and, perhaps just as importantly, learn to trust and let go where control was never really available anyway.

The interesting question may therefore not be, "How powerful am I?"

Perhaps it is, "Where is my power in this moment?"

Look carefully. There may be more of it there than you realised.

Pete is an Alakai of Huna International living in the UK. He uses Huna for coaching and empowerment and produces the Huna Adventurer's Newsletter and teaches a range of workshops based on Huna including the forthcoming [Pathways to Personal Power: An Inner Journey to Living More Fully](#) 10 part class. For more information and to sign up to the free newsletter visit: www.urbanhuna.org