

## Think for Yourself Be Happy

Few there are that are progressed enough to take responsibility for their feelings. Instead most of us invariably blame anyone but ourselves when we feel slighted, disrespected, or worse. It is all too typical when hurt or taken advantage of, to hold on to the emotional distress while justifying why we feel as we do. We invariably create a laundry list of real or perceived reasons to prove why we feel as we do. Whereas this is normal enough, it does not change the fact that we have the power to choose how to feel, how to process hurts, and how deeply we decide to entrench any given feeling within our psyche.

Whether we admit it or not, each of us chooses how to feel. No one else forces us to feel what we feel, only us. No person, organization, institution, or government, gets to determine how we process anger, shame, suffering, etc. Yes, others may damage us in some way, but we decide how long we will allow that to hurt. We either slip into feeling sorry for ourselves when negative situations arrive, or we decide to rise above them. This is what Free Will is all about. We have the power to choose. Easy to say. Not so easy to grasp and implement. Overcoming the need to condemn others for our negative emotions is not easy.

Holding on to hurtful, angry, negative emotions is detrimental to our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. And how we judge and interpret other people's choices and conduct impacts how we subconsciously feel about ourselves. This is true, no matter how badly we want it to be otherwise. The subconscious, which is responsible for about 95% of all thought and emotion, does not differentiate between others and me. It simply records emotional frequency and mirrors more of the same back into my reality. Failing to let go of blaming others, and replaying perceived hurts and injustice, creates suffering. Suffering is therefore a choice. We either bathe in our own generated misery, or we step up and decide to not engage in the illusion any longer.

The Stoics figured out emotional consequences 2,500 years ago and wrote about them extensively. As a young man, I read the Great Books of the Western World, all sixty volumes. I consumed the Stoic essays with avid interest and saw the essential logic therein. Unfortunately, I failed to apply the insight. My reading passion had been an intellectual exercise, without any thought as to real life application. UGH. Only after years of life experience was I moved to readdress

the concepts and endeavor to live them. It is clear enough that we can improve the way we feel, nevertheless, it is a continuing process, and not something one is able to claim they've accomplished.

The conscious mind differentiates. The ego mind always points outside itself and blames others for negative feelings. The more analytical and critical of others we become, the more negativity is reflected back into our deeper mind. Everything we think, do and feel is a mirror into our subconscious. It is the subconscious that determines whether or not we experience happiness, and if so, how much we are allowed. We may not like it, but this is how it works. Misery likes company, and misery generates more of itself for continual consumption. The same is true of gratitude and love.

To be happy, we must focus on gratitude and love and let go of fear in all its varied forms, i.e. Shame, Guilt, Apathy, Grief, Jealousy, Fear, Hatred, etc. Actionable love is the forgiveness. Forgiveness is the foundation of emotional and spiritual evolution. Without complete and utter forgiveness of everyone of everything, including forgiving ourselves, we are mired in self-pity, which prevents peace, harmony, joy, and happiness.

It is a fundamental truth that we attract what we are. We do not attract what we say we want. We attract what we are, and what we are is what we feel and believe. Ergo, we are the sum and total of all our thoughts, beliefs, and the emotions we have allowed ourselves to feel the most deeply. Most of the hurtful feelings from the past we have long forgotten at the conscious level. But the subconscious mind holds on to every feeling we have ever had, until or unless we are committed to release the negativity by deep, meaningful forgiveness, an act of real love.

So it is, if we want more happiness in our life, we must let go of all our past hurts and emotional trauma and find reasons to be grateful. A tall order for most of us. And yet, there is no other way to happiness. We cannot skirt it, we cannot rationalize it, we simply must do it. We must refocus, sometimes almost entirely, and very likely retrain ourselves to smile more easily, laugh without guile, and enjoy the very now. And we must do this no matter how much our ego demands we worry about the future, find misery in the past, and question our own self-worth.

It is a truism that like attracts like. Positive feelings attract positivity. Negative feelings attract negativity. Therefore, we must guard against lazy thinking and the

ego demand that we blame our unhappy feelings on others. It is not true. We want it to be true because it excuses us from doing the work to examine ourselves more deeply. But it is our choice alone. We decide whether to be happy or not. No one else has that authority over us. We decide, or we fail to decide and auto default to the past emotional trauma stored in our deep mind.

Forgiveness and gratitude are the foundation of happiness. Period. Full stop. That is as simple and complicated as it is. Unless we forgive everyone of everything for the entirety of our lives until the present, we are stuck in a misery of our own choosing. Whether the grudges we hold are based on truth or not, it simply doesn't matter, because we become what we decided to believe and thus it shapes the way we feel about ourselves. We do not have to be friends with those who have demonstrated their lack of integrity, honesty, and worse, but we do need to forgive them. Do it out loud in private but do it as soon as you are able and do it again and again until you believe it. Every day you hold on to emotional pain, it is a powerful programming mechanism that will ultimately damage us. On yeah, and let's not forget, that without a deep sense of gratitude for all that is, we cannot feel joy.

It is important to remember that reality does not respond to what you say, it responds to what you are. This is true within the context of the greater purpose we have agreed to before birth. In the pre-existence, before our human incarnation, we as an eternal soul have surely agreed to confront a series of pre-determined dilemmas within this physical life that are designed for our own personal evolution. Struggles and difficulties are a normal part of living. Some are pivotal. How we respond and reflect upon them determines the quality of our lives.

Life on planet earth is a fast-track experiential classroom. It is not a courtroom; this erroneous concept is based on fear, which is the polar opposite of love. Fear based ideology is manipulative and gives surreptitious authority to others. We are here to gain the insight that only practical real-life experience provide. And, whether we like it or not, the fastest progress in our personal evolution comes through trial and struggle. So, when emotionally stressful situations present themselves, as they invariably will, we can reframe them by asking ourselves, "What can I learn from this experience?" Asking the question out loud can recontextualize the drama into something more interesting and beneficial. It allows us to rise above common distress and move back to focusing on Gratitude and Forgiveness.