

Reflections **on Life**



Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

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A compilation of selected articles by Dr. Ong Tien Kwan and other authors

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LIVING SKILLS

Mindfulness and Letting Go

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Living skills are skills that help you to live your life better. Unfortunately, living skills are often not taught or emphasized in schools. Thus, most people acquire living skills from the “school of hard knocks” – through experiences in life.

There are many living skills. Two of the most important and useful skills are mindfulness and letting go.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is effective in noting the arising of our thoughts and in managing the contents of our thoughts and beliefs. It is particularly useful in changing the self limiting beliefs we have that is preventing us from unlimited possibilities. Since changing these unconscious self limiting beliefs requires that we first identify them, mindfulness plays a crucial role in this identification process.

When we are mindful of the thoughts and beliefs in our mind, we can then work on replacing limiting beliefs with wholesome and life-enhancing ones.

How can we increase our mindfulness? We can do that through meditation.

Meditation, when done on a regular basis, increases our mindfulness and allow us to gradually peel away layers upon layers of negative mental and emotional imprints, and creating rooms for new positive and life-enhancing beliefs and imprints. This process is often compared to peeling the layers of an onion. Some compared it to tending a garden.

Another way for us to identify our self limiting beliefs is through the Option Method, which was created and introduced in New York City around 1970 by Bruce DiMarsico.

Bruce had studied psychology and philosophy. Years later, while working as a psychotherapist and human relations consultant, he developed the Option Method as a self-help tool for people to become happier in their everyday lives. Option Method uses a series of questions to help you identify and clarify what exactly is bothering you. The

questions that follow then expose the belief behind your emotion or bad feeling. As the questions open the door to your heart, your true feelings will become evident.

Letting Go

The ability to let go complements mindfulness. Mindfulness allows us to be aware of our negative thoughts, beliefs and feelings. With the awareness and insights we can then let go of them.

Since we spend almost every waking hours seeking, acquiring, grasping and clinging on to things, we have the tendency to resist letting go. In fact, most people find it extremely difficult to let go of anything and particularly of feelings and beliefs. This is because we have learned to identify our feelings and beliefs as ourselves. We think we are our feelings and beliefs. Thus we fight and struggle to keep these feelings and beliefs in an effort to preserve our SELF, regardless of whether they are useful or harmful to us.

One method of letting go is through mindfulness itself. When we are aware of our negative thoughts and feelings, which often hide in our subconscious mind, we can then decide to let them go. So mindfulness and letting go come hand-in-hand.

Another method of letting go unwanted feelings is to actually allow ourselves to feel the negative feelings, and then ask ourselves three important questions:

- 1..Could I let it go?
2. Would I let it go?
3. When?

The answer to the first question is always a “Yes”. We can always let go of anything, even long standing and major mental and emotional imprints.

The second question is more personal. “Would I let it go?” is intended to give yourself the permission to let it go. For some people, it may take a while to give a “Yes” answer to this question. It is perfectly alright. In fact, this step cannot be rushed so take your time. You need to convince yourself (and no one else) and when you are ready and willing, then say “yes” to it. In some cases, going through and completing the forgiveness process is essential to finally allow yourself to let go.

The last question, “When?” gives you a time frame. The best time is of course “NOW” but this again depends on whether you are mentally and emotionally ready to let go. It is perfectly alright to choose a time that is most appropriate for you.

This method that I have just described was created by Lester Levenson and is now called the Sedona Method.

How to Make the Right Decision... the Spiritual Way

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

We make decisions every day. Most times, these decisions do not lead to a significant change in outcome. For example, we decide whether to have sandwich or pizza for dinner, or we decide whether to watch a movie or go to the park this weekend.

However, some decisions can lead to big changes in our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Changing career is one such example of a significant decision. Relocating to a new house, neighborhood or country is another. Deciding whether to continue with certain therapies or not when we are unwell is also potentially life altering.

When it comes to making big decisions that will likely change our lives significantly, we are often faced with doubts about whether we are making the right decisions or not. How do we decide? What are our criteria? What is our motivation?

For me, I have come to realize that when I make decisions, I should look at my motivations. If the decision made is motivated by fear, most often it will turn out to be the wrong decision. However, if it is motivated by unconditional love or faith in the universe, then it will invariably turn out right. By unconditional love, I refer to the absence of ego. In contrast, decisions based on greed and anger have never failed to turn out to be wrong for me in the long term.

I now use this as my yardstick when making important decisions in my life. So far, it has worked very well for me.

For example, when my father was diagnosed with a growth in his rectum, my family looked to me to decide where to send him for his surgery. As a doctor, I was automatically expected to know who was the best surgeon and which was the best hospital for treatment. My first thought was to refer him to the most reputable hospital in the city, which was also the most expensive hospital as well. On the other hand, I knew a very competent and compassionate doctor who has just the right competency for the job, although he is not “famous” and was working in a small hospital.

When I examined my motivation for that initial thought, I soon realized that it was based on fear and ego – fear that if I do not send him to the best hospital, I might be

blamed if the surgery was not successful. In addition, there was the ego that seems to say “What would others think if you sent your father to a small hospital?”

In the end, I decided to follow my heart and referred my father to this competent doctor in a small hospital, and it turned out to be a blessing. Not only did he operated successfully on my father, he was so patient and friendly to all of us that the whole family felt confident and comfortable with him. Eventually, my father was discharged uneventful. It was a huge relief for me.

When we live a spiritual life, and especially when we have faith in our spirituality, decisions that are based on unconditional love and faith in our spirituality, that goes beyond our selfish ego and needs, are often the right decisions.

When we have the courage to make those decisions, we will often find them to be most beneficial for our spiritual growth. In addition, they reinforce and validate our trust in the benevolence of the universe.

Three Ways to Practice Gratitude

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Gratitude is a powerful positive emotion that generates a feeling of blessedness and contentment. This indirectly makes one feels lucky and fulfilled, which is the opposite feeling of misfortune, lack or scarcity. Thus, according to the Law of Attraction, a sense of gratitude attracts into your life more experience and opportunities for abundance and good fortune.

That is the reason why gratitude is an attitude that is strongly encouraged in all religions. Through constant practice of gratitude, one can learn to be genuinely grateful for all the little things in one's life. Here are three ways to practice gratitude.

1. Be grateful for the things that went right in your life

These are usually the things that we have put in the effort and planned for. For example, we can feel grateful for the job interview that went right, or the launching of our project that we have planned for weeks. We can feel grateful for having done a great presentation to our clients. Anything that we have planned for or put in extra effort consciously to make it happen falls into this category.

2. Be grateful for the things that did not go wrong

These are usually things that we take for granted each day, such as driving to work or spending time with our children. We can feel grateful that we were not stopped by a traffic police on our way to work, or that we arrive safely to our work place. We can be grateful for having some time to play with our children or going to a movie. Reflect on how many people in this world do not even have enough to eat or a place to sleep, or cannot have a peaceful sleep because of the fear of war. These are the everyday things which we have taken for granted. Be grateful for these things that did not go wrong.

3. Be grateful for things that did go wrong but you were able to learn something from them

We are make mistakes. Some of these mistakes may be major errors in judgments. We may even have hurt some people. When we make these mistakes and have learned from them, the mistakes are not made in vain. We benefited from these experiences. Be

grateful that we are able to learn from them. Most people make mistakes in relationships, and despite having made mistakes many continue to repeat the same mistakes. If you do not repeat your mistakes, be thankful that you have learned from your mistakes.

How to Simplify Your Life in 5 Steps

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

The modern lifestyle is a stressful lifestyle. It is based on the belief that more is better – more things to do, more things accomplished, more gains, more activities, more sense stimulation. Thus the need to have more money and more possessions. However, such a life is not necessarily more fulfilling. In fact, it often leads to a more stressful life, more sickness and more frustrations.

Great rewards await those who can simplify their lives. A simple life can be more fulfilling, more peaceful and more beneficial to you. It can be more conducive to a happier and healthier life, and it can improve your relationships tremendously.

Here are 5 steps to simplify your life:

1. Prioritize

The first thing to do is to spend some time to decide what is truly important to you. Is it your health, time with loved ones or service to community? It might interest you to know that people in their death beds do not worry about how much money or properties they have accumulated. Rather, they are concerned about the quality of the relationships they have, and they are particularly worried about any unfinished business or unresolved conflicts with their loved ones. Rather than repairing damaged relationships when we are dying, is it not wiser to cultivate quality relationships while we are still healthy and alive?

2. Slow Down

Do not measure your life by the number of tasks you do each day. Many people squeeze as many tasks as they can into their day, thinking that the more they do, the more they achieve. In doing so, they are able to accomplish more tasks but at the expense of truly living and enjoying the tasks they do. They sacrifice quality for the number. The way to truly live is to slow down and enjoy each moment and task that you do. Make each task meaningful. Be present in the moment instead of rushing through the task. When you

have worked out your priorities (in #1), you will be able to know what is important and what is not, and you can then reduce the unnecessary tasks, leaving you with more time for the more important tasks.

3. Discard the Unnecessary

Take time to unclutter your life. Begin by uncluttering your possessions. Look at your table. Check out the storerooms. Are there anything there that you can discard? Are you hoarding too many things in your life? The habit of hoarding is a sign of insecurity, a manifestation of fear. The more things you need to feel safe indicates the more fear in you. Material possessiveness is just one sign of this insecurity. Look within your mind and you will probably see that there are many more sense of insecurity in your thoughts. Learn to let go of those fear too. The more you let go, the lighter you will feel, and paradoxically the less you fear. Remember that there are many people who have been able to live with far less than what you have. Note also that the more you feed this hoarding habit, the stronger it gets and the more insecure you will feel.

4. Reduce Information Overload

Our modern life is bombarded by information from all directions. We are reachable every minute with our mobile phones, and we are constantly connected to news via the internet, emails, social networks and the traditional newspapers, televisions and radios. If we want to find some peace of mind, we need to reduce all these bombardments. We need to be able to switch off our phones, computers, televisions and radios, and reward ourselves with some time free from all these intrusions. We need to spend some quiet and uninterrupted time with ourselves and our loved ones.

5. Learn Gratitude

Rather than cultivating a habit of feeding our wants and needs, which is like a bottomless black-hole that can never be filled, it is more fruitful to cultivate a habit of reducing our wants and needs. Learn instead to be grateful for whatever we have. We can be grateful for all the things that went right in our life, such as the party we planned for our child's birthday, a wonderful weekend trip with the family or simply spending a restful evening with our loved ones. We can also be grateful for the things that did not go wrong in our life. Many of the things we take for granted can go wrong. For example, our daily trip to work can be met with an accident or a flat tyre or unexpected natural disaster can take just about everything away from us. The fact that they did not go wrong is something to be grateful for. Finally, even if something did go wrong, we can still be grateful for the lesson it has taught us.

When we slow down our life, we get to listen to our heart. We learn to appreciate every moment and every interaction with others more deeply. Our senses can become more acute and sharp, and life is more likely to unfold beautifully before our eyes. Try it and you will find that it is easy to fall in love with the simple life.

How to Forgive Yourself

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

In one of the personal transformation workshops that I conducted, one of the participants asked, “How do you forgive yourself?” Such a simple and straightforward question, yet the ramifications are immense. The question does not just say, “Teach me how to forgive myself” but also suggests that “I do not know how to forgive myself” or “I do not know how to love myself”.

Truly, it seems that loving one self is one of the hardest things to do in life. To me, not to be able to love one self is symptomatic of several issues, namely, self blame, not being able to accept one’s own imperfections, not knowing how to be compassionate towards one self and ironically, not willing to take responsibility for one’s own happiness.

Self forgiving is essential for healing our wounds – spiritual, mental, emotional and physical. However, in order to forgive one self, one has to learn these few things:

1. End the Blame Game

Our mind has a habit of looking for someone to blame for all the unpleasant things in life. Therefore, by extension, if it is not someone else’s faults, then it must be our own fault. Thus the self blame begins. People who blame themselves are often also critical of others. They have the habit of finding faults in this and that, in this person or that person, in the government, in mother nature and in just about any other things. It is this very mental habit of criticizing that is harmful – to ourselves, to our relationships with others and to our society as a whole.

Thus, if you truly want to learn to forgive yourself, learn to stop this blame game.

Accept that people are not perfect. This is a fact. The sooner you accept that you are not perfect, the easier it is for you to start forgiving yourself. Our goal in life is to do the best we can despite our imperfections. It is also to learn of our imperfections and to see if we can and would like to transform those imperfections to something better. In this way, life becomes a constantly growing process of self improvement.

In the same way that you accept the fact that you are not perfect, please also remember that others are also not perfect. So, do not expect perfection from them. To do so only set yourself up for unnecessary disappointments. Be forgiving towards their mistakes. As you become more forgiving towards their mistakes, you will learn also to be forgiving towards yourself. If you find that you are habitually hard on others, you will discover that you are also hard on yourself.

2. Be Compassionate towards Yourself

As you learn to end the blame game, your level of compassion will rise. Indeed, compassion flows naturally out of your being when you stop blaming. This is because when you stop the blame game, your perspective will shift. Instead of seeing and jumping on the mistakes, you see the sufferings in the person. You will see that he or she is just like you, vulnerable and fearful, and acting out of those fears instead of out of the wisdom of love. Again, as you become more genuinely compassionate towards others, you will learn to be more compassionate towards yourself too.

3. Take Responsibility for your own Happiness

By this, I mean that no one can make you unhappy without your co-operation. This is a lesson that I learned from Bruce di Marsico, an American psychologist who introduced the [Option Method](#). According to Bruce, we all have the option to choose whether to be happy or not, regardless of the circumstances. If we choose not to be happy, it is only because we believe we have to be unhappy, and this belief is wrong. The Option Method is a simple method that helps you see the error of this sort of thinking.

Truly, we create our own happiness or unhappiness through the way we think. People who are optimistic have a mental habit of seeing the positive side of things. Conversely, pessimists habitually see only the negative. So, if you are seeking for happiness, make sure that your mental habits are suited for this purpose. If not, you take responsibility for them and transform them.

Ironically, some people actually indulge in self pity and self blame as a way to avoid taking responsibility for their own life and happiness. This is usually done unconsciously, meaning that they are not aware that they are doing this to themselves. Thus the first step to re-claiming yourself in this instance is to become aware of this unhealthy mental habit.

In fact, self awareness is the first step to a lot of healing processes, including forgiving ourselves.

4. Learn the Lessons and Move On

Making mistakes is inevitable in life. The important thing is to be able to learn the lessons we need to improve ourselves from those mistakes and move on. There is no need to brood long and hard over the mistakes. In fact, it is unhealthy to do so. Grieve and feel remorse, if you must, but there is no point in beating yourself up over and over again. What is done is done. You cannot turn back time. Just learn the lessons and make sure you do not repeat those mistakes in future. In this way, you will benefit as you become a better person. In addition, the people around you will benefit as well.

If you learn all these 4 things well, you will be able to forgive yourself.

How to Find Peace in the midst of Chaos

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

The world we live in today is in chaos. Greed and hatred are seen manifesting everywhere. People are living in fear, feeling a great sense of insecurity and frustration. Government and financial systems are falling apart. Nothing seems to be working.

In a world where chaos seems to reign, is there any hope of finding peace? Here are a few tips to reclaim the peace and sense of safety missing in your life today.

1. Look Within

Instead of trying to fix things outside, let us begin by fixing what is wrong inside – within ourselves. Examine our values, beliefs and the principles we uphold. Take a good and honest look at our motivations. Are our actions motivated by fear or by love?

We are now experiencing the effects of actions that were motivated by greed (financial collapse) and hatred (terrorism). We should know by now that if our motivation is not pure, the end result cannot be good, even if it may look good in the short term.

2. Eliminate Fear and Selfishness

The more we feed fear, the stronger fear grows. We need to recognize and acknowledge the fear within us, and face our fear. Only when we do that can we learn to overcome our own fear. It is possible to live a life without fear. Indeed, that is what ultimately freedom means – the freedom from fear.

Again, when we look at the world outside, we are seeing repressive regimes that promote fear and exploit their people are now having to deal with the backlash of such repressions. Fear cannot sustain itself. Eventually, it will fail.

The same is true for us as well. If we let fear becomes the motivating force in our life – in our behaviors and actions – it will eventually fail us too. If we look closely, we will realize that selfishness is a form of fear. Therefore, we need to eliminate selfishness.

3. Seek Peace within You

Peace is our birthright. It is our true nature, our essence. If we look within and eliminate fear, we will find peace within us. It has been there all the time. Only our fear and selfishness have blinded us and obscure our sight.

If you have been living fearfully all your life, it can be difficult to believe that peace is within you. Yet, you must have faith that this is true. Only then will you begin to seek it within.

Once again, we can look at the world outside to learn that all who seek peace outside have not found it. Only those who seek peace within have found it. Ask the sages and the saints. They will tell you this simple truth.

Put these three simple tips into practice in your life and you will reap the benefits.

I wish for you peace and joy in life.

Mind Power

How Beliefs Work

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

A belief is merely a perception of reality.

The ancient spiritual teachers taught us that there are two types of truths – absolute truth and relative truth.

We live in a universe where everything we perceive is relative to something else. It is a relative universe. An object is big in relation to another smaller object. However, when compared to a larger object than itself, then it is small.

The same is true for everything else, whether it is about money, temperature, skills, knowledge, feelings or wisdom. Everything is relative.

In a relative universe such as ours, truth is therefore only relative. It is never absolute. Absolute truth cannot be perceived by our normal way of perceiving or seeing the world.

We see and experience the world according to our beliefs

One of the important things we need to realize is that we see and experience our world according to our beliefs. If we believe that this universe we live in is a hostile place, then we will selectively choose to see evidence to validate this belief. We see violence, hunger, poverty and all the negative images and events in the world we live in.

In truth, what we have done is that we have focused our attention to these negative qualities and events. There are just as many positive qualities and events out there, such as peace, abundance, beauty, tolerance, generosity, love and wisdom. Since our belief in a hostile world directs our focus onto the negative events, we easily miss out on all these positive qualities that are also in abundance in this world. The more focused you are on the negatives, the harder it is for you to see the positives.

There are no right or wrong beliefs, only empowering or limiting beliefs

Fools fight for their beliefs, believing that theirs is the only truth. Some would even kill for their beliefs.

The wise know better than to do that.

Since a belief is a perception of reality, and our perception is grossly limited by our perspective, sense organs and mental filters, we cannot claim to have the only truth or the only right way to perceive a reality.

Looking at reality from a different view point or perspective would give us a different interpretation of the event, as exemplified by the story of the blind men and the elephant. In addition, we perceive through our sense organs but these sense organs also have limitation. For example, our eyes can only see certain wavelengths of light, as are our ears to sound. Animals have different sensitivity to light and sound compared to ours and so they perceive the world differently. To further distort reality, each of us has our own mental filters in the form of existing beliefs, concepts and assumptions in our mind when we interpret what we perceive.

Seen from this perspective, there are then no right or wrong beliefs, only beliefs that are useful to expand and enhance your life or beliefs that are limiting your self and restricting your growth.

One of the goals of mind training, therefore, is to change our limiting beliefs by replacing them with empowering beliefs.

How to change beliefs

“Awareness before change” is a good adage to remember in personal transformation. Whatever it is we want to change in ourselves, we must first have the awareness that what we have right now is inadequate or harmful. Only then will we be motivated enough to change. This is especially true for beliefs.

To change our beliefs, we should first be aware of our existing beliefs. Unfortunately, most of our beliefs are beyond our conscious awareness. They are in our subconscious mind.

We can increase our awareness of our beliefs, assumptions and concepts about the universe and life through regular meditation and contemplation. Constantly challenging our assumptions, beliefs and understanding about how the universe works helps to expand our thoughts and open our mind to new possibilities. The use of positive

affirmations and subliminal messages also help to replace our limiting beliefs with empowering ones. For some, hypnosis and neurolinguistic programming work for them.

In short, there are many methods to change our beliefs but you will only attract them into your life when you have decided to change your limiting beliefs. After all, that is how the universe works. You attract whatever you focus on.

The Hidden Dimension of Beliefs

One of the most misunderstood aspects of beliefs is that it is only about thoughts. The truth is beliefs are more than just thoughts. There is another dimension to it, which is emotion. A belief is a thought that is in tune with or resonates with an emotion. Both thought and emotion are in congruence, not in conflict.

A belief is therefore a thought with a lot of emotional investment in it. That is the source of its power. An empowering belief is a source of power for good while a limiting belief can be extremely destructive. That is why we must choose our beliefs carefully and consciously.

After all, whether you believe something to be true or not, you are right. Whether you believe you can or cannot, you are also right. That is the paradox of beliefs.

Why Mind Power works for Some and not Others

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Ever since I started writing about my experience with mind power and spirituality, I've had people asking me how it has changed my life. These are the very people who have also tried their hands on mind power and it hasn't seem to work for them.

So why does mind power work for some and not for others?

Here are some reasons:

1. The Power of Belief

"Whether you believe you can or can't, you're right." – Henry Ford

What Henry Ford meant was that if you believe you can succeed, then you will. On the other hand, if you believe that you cannot succeed, then you can't. And that's really the crux of the issue.

Most people tried mind power tactics and tools half-heartedly. This really set them up for failure even before they begin. I can tell whether a person will succeed or not simply by the degree of faith and commitment he or she has. Most people just want to "try it", so they don't do it diligently and they give up after a short while. That just won't do.

2. The Power of Commitment and Persistence

Results from mind power are not instantaneous. They take time to manifest from the formless realm of mind and thoughts into physical reality. In order to taste its fruits, you'll have to work at it and give it time to manifest. It's very much like planting a tree. You start with a seed – whatever seed you choose to grow – and then you must water it, give it the nutrients and sunshine it needs, pull out all the weeds around it, and pretty soon it grows into a shoot and then into a tree. That takes time and commitment. Most people give up too easily.

3. The Power of Knowledge

It's important to know what you're doing, and whether you're doing it right. So understanding the universal laws and how they work is of primary importance. In fact, if you fully understood the laws, you'll have the faith to go with its applications.

For me, the understanding and the faith came after reading and researching for quite a while. It's not enough reading just one or two books on mind power and assume you already know everything.

Every author has something new to share, a unique twist or an insight that is just right for you. So keep reading. I often get my best insights from little known authors, so don't discount authors you haven't heard of before. For example, two years ago I have not even heard of Wallace D. Wattles, the author of "The Science of Getting Rich", yet his books have already made quite an impact in society. There are really quite a number of very good but obscure authors out there, and with the Internet, it's much easier to find them than before.

In the past, all these books would have been considered as occult knowledge, but in the age of the Internet, not anymore.

Finally, I continue to encourage you to pursue your dreams via cultivation of your mind. Once you've tasted its fruits, you'll regard life as a play – a creative game where you DO have absolute control over. The degree of control you have over your own life is proportionate to the degree of control you have over your mind.

7 Things You Should Know about Mind Power

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Every since the natural Law of Attraction was popularized to the masses through the phenomenal success of The Secret movie, just about every one is trying out his or her own version of mind power and mental manifestation.

However, there are a few basic things we need to know before we even begin.

1. You are a divine being

Modern man is so pre-occupied with the need to eke out a living that he is only aware of and is focused on his physical existence and needs. He is largely unconscious of his other existence – the formless and limitless mind.

In order to master your mind power, you need to be fully aware of this aspect of your existence, and realize that this is the power to your creation. This is the aspect that directly links you to your spirituality.

Begin each day remembering this divine nature of yours and you will begin to cultivate a new habit of purposeful creation.

2. Your mind is the creator of your experience

You are the creator of your own life and a co-creator of the universe you live in. Whatever you experience in your life – good and bad – is a mirror reflection of the inner state of your mind.

“As within, so without” is not just a nice saying. It is the actual description of how the universe works. When your mind is filled with garbage – negative thoughts and emotions, constant judging and blaming, resentments and irritations – it attracts precisely the same into your life. Likewise, when you have predominantly positive thoughts – unconditional love, compassion, gratitude, joy and blamelessness – then you attract into your life a happy and joyful experience.

3. You are fully responsible for your creations

Since you are the creator of your own life through your thoughts, you are 100% responsible for your own creations. If you are experiencing a life you do not like right now, it is all the result of your past thoughts. Therefore, you cannot blame your parents, your siblings, your spouse, your children, your unfortunate circumstances and any other kind of excuses for your conditions.

The idea is that you begin to accept full responsibility for your life and drop the habit of judging and blaming others. Only when you have done that will you be able to fully master your own destiny. Otherwise, you will only continue to look for someone or something to blame for your misfortunes.

4. You are creating all the time, whether you are aware of it or not

After watching The Secret movie, many people think that now they can begin to create a life that they want, as if all these times they have not been creating it. Know that you are creating every moment with your thoughts. You are doing it now even as you are reading this article. Creation is a moment to moment process and the only point of creation is NOW.

The point is we are not learning to create only now. We have been creating all the time. The difference now is that we want to create consciously. We want to be fully aware of what we create.

To do so, we need to be fully aware of what thoughts we allow in our mind. We want to be able to have only good positive thoughts and throw away the bad negative thoughts. We want to be fully conscious of what we are creating and therefore attracting into our lives.

5. To create consciously, you must master your mind

This is probably the most difficult challenge for most people. We are in the habit of living our lives without giving much thought to what goes in and out of our mind. We have been living on default or autopilot. It has become a mental habit that is hard to break.

To create our life consciously, we need to change this mental habit. We must have absolute mastery over our mind. We consciously determine what goes in and out of our mind, and choose only positive thoughts while discarding the negative ones.

This requires mental training or mind mastery. This is very much like an athlete who trains his body to perform as he wishes. With mind training, we want to train our mind to perform as we wish.

6. The key to mind mastery is mindfulness

Mindfulness or self awareness is the mental tool we need to master our mind. We need to sharpen this mindfulness and raise it to a new and higher level of awareness – a level that allows us to be fully aware of when our thoughts just begin to arise, what they are and to consciously change the negative thoughts as they arise and replace them with positive thoughts.

This simple objective is by no means easy to accomplish. It requires constant effort to be mindful. Only with persistence and discipline can this be achieved.

Mind training is easy to understand but not easy to do. That is why it is said that even an 8 year old may understand it but even an 80 year old may not be able to practice it.

7. Not everyone is ready for mind training

While it is true that a good teacher can find the right approach to teach any student, not every one who wants to learn mind training is ready for it. Those who are mentally unstable would not be suitable for it. It is certainly not for the mentally ill.

Sometimes certain new methodology such as brainwave entrainment is used as an adjunct to mind training. This may not be suitable for those with epilepsy or a history of fits.

So, before you begin your mind training, do your homework and learn as much as you can about it. There are tons of books on mind power. Some classic books on this new thought movement that I strongly recommend you read are those written by authors such as Wallace D. Wattles, Thomas Troward, James Allen, Annie Besant, Ernest Holmes and many more. They are well written, easy to understand and provide a good solid foundation to the understanding of how our mind and the universe work.

Once you have fully understood the principles, you can begin your own mind training.

Health & Healing

Achieving Optimum Health

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

“Optimum health is not just the absence of disease but the presence of wellness in mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social areas. Some would also include financial health.”

Introduction

Optimum health is essential at all levels, from the individual to the society we live in to the environment around us. We have to start thinking of wealth not just in terms of possession of money and properties but also the possession of mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual well-being.

Mental Health

The truth is mind is the forerunner of all states.

With a proper mindset, a poor man can still be happy. Conversely, if the mindset is not right, no matter how much material possessions you may have, you may still be a very unhappy person. Thus, Gandhi said, “The world has enough for everyone’s needs, but not enough for even a single person’s greed.”

So a healthy mind is one that possesses a mindset that can lead to happiness and contentment with self and the world around us. It provides clarity of thoughts, good insight and the ability to see things through an unbiased mind.

To be able to see things through an unbiased mind is no small feat. It is extremely difficult to note or observe the unfolding of events and phenomena without judging. We habitually associate emotions or feelings to events, and allow such emotions to direct our actions. Our likes for certain things and dislikes for others are closely associated with our emotions.

Emotional Health

It is our emotions that lead us to act impulsively at times. Thus a high level of self-awareness in this area is extremely useful. In fact, it is essential to our well-being. After all, things and relationships that may take us years to build can be destroyed in a moment of anger.

There are positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions such as love, compassion and joy should be cultivated, while negative emotions such as fear, anger and hate need to be eradicated.

When asked about this, a wise sage of India once illustrated with a story:

An old man said to his grandson, “Boy, I have two tigers caged within me. One is love and compassion. The other is fear and anger.”

The young boy asked, “Which one will win, grandfather?”

The old man replied, “The one I feed.”

At times, it may seem that we have no control over our emotions. This is not true. The truth is how well we manage our emotions depends on how aware we are of our emotions, particularly on the arising of our emotions. The earlier we are able to note the arising of our emotions, the better we can manage them.

More and more researches are showing that our well-being is closely linked to our emotional and mental health. Our body's immune system is generally enhanced by positive mental outlook and emotion. Conversely, it is depressed by negative mental and emotional states. Thus, stress, worry, anger and fear are some states that may lead to physical illnesses such as hypertension, cardiac diseases, peptic ulcers, depression and a host of other ailments.

Physical Health

To maintain an optimum physical well-being, therefore, requires us to focus not only on our body but also our mind and emotions.

On a physical level, our body can be kept healthy through adequate sleep and rest, proper nutrition, regular exercises and a healthy environment that is free from pollution.

Spiritual Health

Throughout the ages, wise men have consistently informed and taught us that we are essentially spiritual beings.

Although medical science has not been able to reveal to us our spiritual nature, there are many indirect evidence that we would be foolish to ignore. Stories from people who had gone through a near death experience (NDE), or dying people with heightened nearing death awareness, or simply a cure from an 'incurable' disease all suggest that there is more to life than just the physical state.

Major religions of the world all based their teachings on the belief that we are essentially spiritual beings. According to these teachings, our physical existence is secondary.

While it may be true that we should focus our life more on our spiritual nature than our physical nature, it would be difficult for the majority of people to do so, at least not immediately. Things cannot change overnight. Mindset, however, can, and that is perhaps the best place to start.

Financial Health

However, on a more mundane level, most people are still stuck on how to survive from day to day, where to get the next cheque to pay for the house installment, so on and so forth.

Practically, therefore, we need to look into ways to achieve a financial state that would theoretically free us from the constrain of 'forced' work. This is where the concept of financial freedom is so attractive. According to this concept, one should strive for a state where we have one or more than one source of income that can be generated passively, that is, even when we don't work.

This is what Robert Kiyosaki termed as 'passive income'.

According to him, passive income can only be achieved by becoming an investor or a business owner, not a sole proprietor or an employee. To become an investor or a business owner, you must spend the time and money to acquire financial intelligence. Unlike IQ or EQ, you can acquire financial intelligence through self education.

To get a financial health check-up, consult an accountant, a banker or a financial planner you can trust.

Healthy Relationship

“No man is an island, entire by itself.”

As a medical doctor, I am in a unique position to confront and comfort dying patients. One of the most important thing that I have observed is that dying people do not ask about their money or possessions. Instead, they focus their remaining energy and strength on trying to heal wounded relationships. It is as though there is an inherent need to get a proper closure to a relationship.

Thus, forming and cultivating a healthy relationship is important for our well-being. Unfortunately, this is something we often ignored until it is too late. If there is any forgiving to be done, or the need to be forgiven, leaving things to the last minutes may end up with an unfulfilled desire for a closure.

Knowing this now, shouldn't we spend more time and effort in improving our relationship with our loved ones, especially with our parents, spouse, children and siblings?

Befriending Your Emotional Pain

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Mary-Beth came to see me one evening complaining of backache which has been troubling her for several months. There was no injury or fall. The pain just seems to appear out of the blue. A physical examination did not reveal any physical signs. After a couple of attempts to treat her symptomatically, the pain remains. She was eventually referred to a specialist but despite extensive investigations, no physical abnormality was found.

When she came back to see me for further review one afternoon, we decided to try hypnosis to uncover the cause of her backache. It was in this session that we soon discovered a traumatic childhood and the fractured relationship that she had with her mother. Apparently, this fractured mother-daughter relationship was the cause of her backache. After talking and crying, she felt better.

Soon after that session, her backache vanished. It did not come back until about two months later when old family issues recurred.

This story illustrates two important points. The first is that emotional pain can manifest as physical pain. The second is that we often unconsciously leave our emotional pain unattended to until it becomes too big to handle. An emotional pain, like an abscess that is unattended, will eventually fester and burst through.

Many people find emotional pain more difficult to endure than physical pain. We are often so fearful of emotional pain that our normal instinct is to resist it when it arises. Too frequently, we treat emotional pain like a giant, hideous monster, believing that it is dangerous and harmful. Thus, in a knee-jerk fashion, we either run away, fight or hide from it out of fear. Unfortunately, whatever we resist persists and very often grows even stronger.

The truth is that emotional pain, although it may look hideous and dangerous, is actually not harmful at all. It only becomes harmful when we believe it to be so. The very act of believing it to be harmful gives it the power to harm us. If we were to respond to our emotional pain in a counter-intuitive way, by watching, welcoming and even embracing it, we would be surprised by its revelations.

Using mindfulness as a tool, we can become aware of our emotional pain without falling into our mental tendency to judge it, resist it or push it away. It is often a habit of the mind to want to manipulate, control or hide what is emotionally painful and undesirable. This is the first awareness towards befriending our emotional pain. It is a crucial first step as it allows us the space to observe the unfolding of the pain without wanting to change it in any ways.

After some experience with non-judgmental awareness of our feelings, we begin to see that emotions are simply transient processes that arise and pass away, much like a passing cloud. It is not dangerous or harmful when we do not give it the power to harm us through our erroneous beliefs. In fact, after some time, we realize that we can even embrace and welcome these emotions without identifying and clinging to them as ours. In other words, we do not have to personalize these emotions.

In reality, we are living in an impersonal universe. Nothing in it is personal without our own mind personalizing and identifying with it – not our thoughts nor our emotions. The moment we make our thoughts and emotions as ours, we give it the co-operation and the power to affect us. In other words, we dis-empower ourselves.

As we become more skillful at befriending our emotions through non-judgmental self-awareness, we find it easier to be accepting and forgiving. It becomes easier to let go of the unwanted resistance and burdens we have been carrying. We become lighter and find our life more peaceful and easy.

We find inner peace.

Self Forgiveness is Essential for Healing

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

In the waiting room in my clinic, there is a poster that says “Self Forgiveness is Essential for Healing”. A patient once asked me what it means and why I put it up there.

There are two main reasons why I put the poster up.

Firstly, I want my patients to realise that some physical illnesses are just manifestations of unresolved emotions and conflicts. Most times, these unresolved emotions have to do with anger and self blame. Both emotions are actually two sides of the same coin. The difference is that with anger, we direct the negative emotion outward at an external object or person while we direct it inwardly at ourselves in self blame. Both emotions are harmful to ourselves and may actually lead to physical illnesses. Some researchers believe that there is a strong link between such negative emotions with cancer.

In my own practice, I see some patients whose physical symptoms are actually caused by such negative emotions. One particularly noteworthy case was of a lady in her mid-thirties who suddenly developed asthma after a recent miscarriage. We initially treated her with anti-asthmatic medications with very little improvement. After about a month on medications, she came one afternoon looking rather sad. When I enquired further, she burst out crying. She disclosed that she had been feeling guilty about her miscarriage and blamed herself for the loss. To make matter worse, she could not discuss her feelings with her husband because he refused to talk about the matter.

I spend about an hour listening to her sorrows, allowing her to grieve for her loss. As she described her pain, she cried but I could see that it was good for her to discharge her pent up emotions.

After this visit, I did not see her for some time. Several months later, she came by to see me again. This time it was to thank me for the last consultation. Apparently, ever since that consultation, her asthmatic symptoms disappeared and never came back.

This demonstrates the negative effects of self blame and guilt, and the power of self forgiving.

There is another reason why I put that poster up, and it is to remind myself sometimes to be kind to myself. As a doctor and a human being, I am sometimes faced with difficult decisions and choices. Sometimes, the decisions I made may turn out to be detrimental to my patients, resulting in unpleasant consequences. Fortunately, such incidents are rare and far in between, but they are a reality of life as a doctor. No doctor with a conscience can continue to provide quality healthcare to his patients if he allows such guilt to haunt him indefinitely. Self blame in such a case is not only harmful to the doctor himself but to the patients he has to treat everyday.

Thus, as a doctor, one has to learn to accept responsibility for his choices, both good and bad. If the decisions happened to be bad, he has to allow himself to grieve and move on as quickly as he can. He does not have the luxury of prolonged griefs.

A healthy way to handle such situations is to consciously accept responsibility for his choices, even if he does not openly admit it to others, learn from it so as not to repeat the same mistake, and then to focus on the immediate task at hand. This can only be achieved with a lot of self forgiving.

As the saying goes, “To err is human, to forgive divine.” While forgiving is indeed divine, self forgiving can be the most difficult thing to do. It is often much easier to blame someone else instead of accepting responsibility for one’s choices. It takes a person of courage and integrity to own his actions.

Relationships

How to Cultivate a Spiritual Relationship

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

What is a spiritual relationship?

A relationship is how we relate to other. A spiritual relationship is a relationship that aims for the highest good for those in the relationship. It is one that facilitates our spiritual growth.

Here are some tips on how to cultivate a spiritual relationship with another.

1. A Spiritual Being in Physical Experience

Most people believe they are physical human beings, with perhaps some tendency or inclination to seek a spiritual experience. Living with this belief automatically limits our spiritual experience for it puts our spirituality in the backseat.

Instead, choose to believe that we are spiritual beings in physical manifestation. This choice automatically brings your spiritual experience into center stage, and you will begin to see every relationship as an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Remember, whatever you choose to believe in, you're right, for a belief is merely a perception of reality.

2. Free Will

As a spiritual being, we have free will and complete control over our life. However, this is only true IF we have full control over our mind. The more mindful or conscious we are, the more free will we have.

Therefore, in every situation in a relationship, we have a choice as to how we choose to respond. We have the freedom to respond positively or negatively. Responding positively not only helps us to grow spiritually but also offer the other person an opportunity to do so as well. When we respond negatively, we miss an opportunity for growth.

3. Do not judge

To judge implies that we are superior to another. It implies that we know better or are more evolved. This is the working of the egoic mind. Every time we judge, we validate and strengthen our egoic mind.

Our egoic mind is the proverbial devil in disguise. If it cannot win by force, it will try to win through cunning and trickery. It is so good and subtle at this that we are often fooled by it.

To judge also implies that we are forcing our own beliefs, concepts, desires and expectations on another. In other words, we are not honoring their free will.

Each time we judge another, we are doing ourselves and the other person a disservice. We are perpetuating a negative tendency that continues to validate our egoic mind. At the same time, we encroach on the other person's space and choice, and are more likely to create a resistance in him or her, rather than a positive respond.

4. Do not blame

To blame also implies superiority over another. To blame another also means we do not take responsibility for our share in the relationship.

A relationship is a two-way thing. It takes two to tango. You cannot clap with one hand. This means that in a relationship, both are equally responsible for the outcome.

When we blame another, we are actually saying, "It is your fault, not mine."

However, we should also remember not to blame ourselves. Since every relationship is an opportunity for spiritual growth, take every situation as an opportunity to learn and evolve. There is no need to blame oneself or others.

5. Acceptance

Learn to accept ourselves and the other person, together with all the strengths and weaknesses. We are here to evolve into a spiritual being with full consciousness in our physical manifestation. Each of us are here for certain unique lessons.

Through acceptance, we help each other to grow. Through acceptance, we let go of our tendency to judge, blame and control.

In cultivating a spiritual relationship, we are BE-ing unconditional love.

A Look at the Principle of Mutuality

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

The **Principle of Mutuality** is a universal principle that says that every interaction we have with another is based on mutual agreement. By this, we mean that the interaction must be fair and beneficial to both parties. Only in this way can the interaction become truly meaningful and healthy.

The acceptance of this principle is implied in every relationship. Problems arise when this principle is violated. Violation can be at the conscious level or the unconscious level.

Taking What is not Given

At the **conscious** level, we violate this principle each time we consciously intent and act to take from others what is not given. This includes the taking of intangible as well as tangible things. *Tangible* things are things like properties, belongings, money and even this body. *Intangibles* are things like life, rights, space, time, self esteem, choices, values and trust. Avoiding taking tangible things from others without their explicit permissions is easier as it requires coarser awareness. Avoiding taking intangible things from others, on the other hand, requires more awareness and attention on our part.

We also often violates the principle of mutuality in an **unconscious** way. By this I mean that we are not fully aware of having violated this principle. Perhaps we did not have the conscious intention to take what is not given to us but due to our lack of self awareness, we nevertheless violated it. To prevent this unconscious violation requires a much higher level of self awareness from us. It requires courageous introspection and the examination of our habitual mental tendencies. Only then can we eliminate this unintentional violation of the principle of mutuality.

Giving Away our Power

Another source of problems with this principle is when we ourselves give away our power to the other party. Most often, we do this unconsciously and unintentionally. When we do not know how to be assertive with our rights, we dis-empower ourselves. When we do not even know our own rights, we do not know what we have given away.

Thus, knowing our rights and being assertive are two essential elements to empowering ourselves. Knowledge is required for the former and courage for the latter.

Two to Tango?

The principle of mutuality is a spiritual principle that governs relationships. When adhered to, it can bring forth spiritually fulfilling encounters and outcomes for everyone in the relationships. This is the ideal spiritual relationship. It is a win-win and is conducive to growth and personal transformation.

Although every relationship involves two or more parties, it does not mean that if the other party chooses to violate this principle, you on your own cannot adhere to it. In fact, irregardless of whether the other party is aware of or adhere to this principle of mutuality or not, you can continue to live in accordance with it.

The Right Attitude

All it needs to succeed with this principle is to have the right attitude. What is the right attitude? When interacting with another, ask yourself “How can I make this interaction beneficial, meaningful and fulfilling to all concerned?”

I see this approach working out very well in my work as a general practitioner. As soon as a patient walked into my consultation room, I ask myself “How can I make this encounter a wonderful experience for him/her?” Most people are already quite apprehensive when they see a doctor, so simply by being warm and friendly, and making them feel at ease begins the process of healing for them.

I believe this approach is suitable for all types of interactions, including personal, social and business, and strongly encourage that you give it a try. You would be amazed at the results.

The Principle of Mutuality in Relationships

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

There is a universal rule or principle that, if properly practiced and adhered to in every layer of societies, will bring about peace, prosperity and justice for all. This principle is called the principle of mutuality. Elsewhere in the scriptures, it is also known as the Golden Rule or “do unto others as you would want others to do unto you”.

The principle of mutuality is based on the recognition that life is precious to all living beings and that every being has the equal right to life, liberty and self expression, provided that in expressing yourself you do not trample on another being’s similar rights. For this principle to work effectively, there is a need for openness, honesty and courage, and the realization that we are all subjected to the universal law of cause and effect. You reap what you sow.

In practical terms, what this means is that you have the same universal rights as everyone else. You do not have more rights than another. Neither do you have less rights than others. This is irregardless of whether you are rich or poor; a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or Jew; a European, Asian, African or Aborigine; a male or female; or whether you are smarter or dumber than others. Likewise, in corporations and governments, you have these same rights to demand for equal justice, regardless of whether you are the governed or the governor.

In our relationships with others, this principle is particularly important in bringing about an equal and enriching partnership. When adhered to, it brings about respect for each other, fair play and sharing of roles and responsibilities. It encourages personal and mutual growth, as well as spiritual development. However, putting this principle into practice is not easy as it requires a high degree of self awareness, a non-judgmental attitude and especially the taming of the ego.

The ego has this attitude that “I am more important than you”. Thus we often see how it tries to manipulate every relationship to its own advantage at the expense of others. In a position of power, it will abuse its power. We see this in government and institutional leaders as well as in homes and families. We see this in teacher-student relationships as well. Even among friends, we need to be aware of this dynamics.

If I ask you to examine your own key relationships, such as husband-wife, parent-child, and employer-employee relationships, are you able to honestly say that these relationships are equal and fair for all concern, or are they heavily leaning to one side? One simple way to know whether our relationship is balanced is to see how happy the two persons in the relationship are. If it is well balanced, then both are equally happy. If either one is unhappy or both are, then an unequal dynamic exists. The more it diverts from the center, the more unhealthy the relationship is, and the more important it is for you to do something about it. Leaving such one-sided relationships in status quo only serves to perpetuate this inequality in your relationships as well as in society. In addition, inaction on your part breeds contempt for yourself and squashes your personal and spiritual growth.

Now is as good a time as any to re-examine all your relationships.

5 Ways to Deal with Conflicts

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Conflicts are bound to arise in our relationships from time to time. Very often, conflicts arise from simple mis-communication. At other times, conflicts are due to clashes of personalities.

Each of us deals with conflicts differently. There are at least 5 ways in which we can deal with conflicts, but not all of them lead to desirable outcomes. Can you identify which of these ways you predominantly use to resolve conflicts in your life?

1. Avoidance

"It's not a big problem. Why rock the boat?"

2. Accommodation

"I'm willing to give up a lot to avoid conflicts."

3. Aggression

"I intend to win this conflict."

4. Compromise

"I'll give in a little if you're also giving in a little."

5. Problem Solving

"If we discuss this honestly and openly, everyone can win."

Not all of these styles are beneficial in the long run. The first three may avoid or delay conflicts, or kick the can down the road a little, but conflicts are not truly resolved. They may in fact fester and get worse later.

If you are using method 1 and 2, you may not be assertive enough and may in fact be treated like a doormat by others. If you prefer method 3, you may actually worsen the conflicts more often than not. Method 4 gives a satisfactory outcome but the best and most matured method is #5.

We all may use any one or all of the above methods to resolve conflicts in our life but there is usually one predominant style we used more often than the rest. So, can you recognize which is your predominant style in resolving conflicts?

If you are not using method 5, I think it is about time you give it a good try.

Death

Cultivate a Friendship with Death

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Why We Fear Death

“Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark.” – Bacon

There may be a thousand reasons why we fear death, but most of all we fear death because we fear the unknown, and death is an unknown entity to most people. We fear that dying may be painful and we do not know what will happen to us at the point of death.

Some people fear death because they imagine the dying process to be very painful. Death is not painful. In fact, death is often very peaceful and silent even for those suffering from cancers or other terminal illness.

When the physical body is deteriorating day by day from a terminal illness, and pain arises from superficial wound such as bed sores, or deep pain such as bone or nerve pain, death may even be a welcome relief for the sufferer.

We need to distinguish the pain of the physical body from the process of dying. The dying process is a distinct process that is separate from the deterioration of the physical body. At the point of death, there is no pain.

What happens at death is the cessation of the breath and all other physiological functions of the physical body. The heart stops pumping and the blood circulation stops moving. The body stops generating heat, and thus progressively turns cold.

For those who believe that we are more than just a physical body, and that we are in fact spiritual beings, the dying process means much more than just physical death. Death is just a natural process that allows us to discard the physical body as we move into the spiritual realm.

Since our fear of death is due to the fact that we do not know or understand death, it makes sense to familiarise ourselves with it. The more we understand death, the less we

fear it. We should therefore cultivate a friendship with death, and be totally familiar with it, just as we are familiar with our friends.

We can cultivate a friendship with death in three simple steps:

1. Establish a link with God.
2. Cultivate a habit of acceptance, instead of blame.
3. Be a blessing to others.

Establish a link with God.

By establishing a link with God, we touch base with our own spirituality. God can be whatever you perceive God to be. For Christians, Muslims and Hindus, that may mean an omnipotent God. For Buddhists, it may mean the Buddha seed within. Atheists may have to come to term with their own spirituality.

Establishing a link with God means re-gaining your spirituality. It leads you closer to the spiritual aspect of yourself. Whether we accept it or not, we are more than just this physical body. When we die, we leave this physical body behind and only our spirituality continues on.

It is therefore essential for us to be familiar with our own spirituality. It is the only part of us that continues after death. This 'fact' is in accordance with all major religions.

Cultivate a Habit of Acceptance.

It is funny how when good things come to us, we readily accept them as though we deserve them or we have worked hard for them, yet when calamities befall us we quickly look for an external source to blame.

This is especially so when misfortunes such as terminal illness befall us. We may blame God, and later blame ourselves or people around us. We should cultivate a habit of neutrality regardless of whether good or bad things come our way. Otherwise, we can become very bitter about life when negative things happened. Looking for someone or something to blame only serve to prolong our own suffering. Death is an enemy when we resist it, but the moment we accept it, it turns into an ally.

However, cultivating a habit of acceptance does not mean not doing anything to correct or improve our conditions. It does not mean, for example, that when we are diagnosed with a terminal illness we do nothing about it. It is only sensible to seek treatment, if it is

available to us. On the other hand, it also means we must know and accept when curative treatment is no longer possible. We fear death only when we refuse to face it.

Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous people who would take advantage of our fear of death to sell their 'cure'. In my experience with the terminally ill, I have come across countless stories of dying people being duped into parting with their savings and properties in the hope of achieving a cure.

Be a Blessing to Others.

This is our greatest and most reliable ally at the time of death.

Knowing that we have been helpful to others and that we have tried to live a blameless life takes away the fear of death. If our life has been an honest one, free of any conscious intention to hurt any living beings, we have nothing to fear when death approaches. Our mind will be at peace, undisturbed.

On the other hand, those who lead selfish lives, and harm others to get little advantages for themselves, find themselves imprisoned in tiny, dark cells when they move to the other side.

Therefore, while we still can, we should give our best to the world and to people around us. Lend a helping hand to others and help to lighten their loads. Bring joy to the joyless and comfort to those in need of comfort. There are many who are less fortunate than us. Count our blessings and be a blessing to others.

On Death and Dying

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

While I was having my lunch two days ago, a patient of mine approached me and made a request that I go to her house to see her husband who is dying of cancer.

Her husband has been suffering of a cancer of the neck which has spread to the liver and other parts of his body for many months. He was growing weaker by the day and his body was getting thinner and more cachexic each time I saw him. I have been visiting him at his home once in a while to help change his urinary catheter.

When we reached her house, I went in and upon looking at her husband, I realised that he had died. To make sure, I checked his carotid pulse, a major pulse at the neck, and found that it was absent. There was no more spontaneous breathing and his pupils were fully dilated and not reactive to lights. I therefore pronounced him dead.

At the realisation of his death, his wife and four children burst out crying, wailing uncontrollably and trying desperately to wake him up from his “sleep”. They were grieving for their loss.

I stayed on for a while and witnessed their griefs. It was healthy that they could cry, that they allow themselves to grieve for their loved one. However, there was nothing else I could do for them and so I left them alone to continue grieving. I left a message for the wife that I would see her again at a later time. I will need to assess her griefs and to make sure that she is able to cope with her loss but right now I need to allow her to grieve.

This incident makes me realised that we are all not prepared for death. In fact, we fear death. Our modern society and culture have always sold us the idea and belief that death is an adversary – a foe to fight against or resist. And so we fight and we resist. We treat death and dying as if it is a disease to be feared. We push the thought of death away from our mind into the deep recesses of our subconscious. In so doing, we not only fear death but also make it very difficult for us to die gracefully and peacefully.

In the past, so called primitive cultures have taken a different approach towards death. Death is a natural process of life. All things that are born must eventually die. That is the

nature of life. In birth, we welcome the spirit into a physical body to experience a physical life. In death, we rejoice that it is now able to leave the worn out body and move on.

While the majority of us fear death, I have also the good fortune to encounter a couple of brave people who choose to die gracefully and in their own ways.

One was an ex-nurse who lived past her 90th birthday. She was a spinster and on her dying days, she lived with her niece. Not only did she prepare herself for her death, she actually prepared her niece and other family members too. She prepared them mentally and emotionally so that they will not grieve too much for her when she died. She even made a list of people she wanted at her funeral – a small but privileged group of people whom have touched her life. She died quietly in her sleep.

In the other case, this lady was also an elderly woman in her 80s. Being a Buddhist, she chose to die by focusing on her faith. A group of meditators were invited to her bedside to meditate throughout her last few hours of life, providing a peaceful and conducive environment where her mind and emotion are at peace and she can therefore move on to her next life with positive and wholesome thoughts.

I was not there when she died but some who were there said there was a feeling of joy in her death.

What a big contrast!

In fearing death, we make dying a painful experience for the dying and everyone concern. In welcoming death, the experience is totally different and even joyful.

I made up my mind that I would prepare myself to welcome death when the time comes.

A Memorable Death

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Marvin is 55 years old and he has a brain tumour. He is getting physically weaker by the day and is now having difficulty in breathing. However, he is still mentally very alert.

Although Marvin knows that death is imminent, he does not seem to fear death, at least not outwardly. As he is not talking very much about his impending death, I take it as a sign that he or those around him have not fully accepted the reality of his situation. I personally feel if this hurdle is overcome, it would make a tremendous change for all.

Good or bad deaths

For the past 17 years, I have witnessed countless deaths. To simplify my observation, some deaths can be termed as “good” or easy while a small number are considered “bad” or difficult.

William was 44 years old when he was diagnosed to have kidney cancer. As his cancer ravaged his bones and liver, he became physically weaker. Refusing to believe that his death was near, he fought it all the way. Each day, he harboured hope for a cure and he was constantly searching for it. He was angry with his doctors because they could not offer him a cure and so he directed his hope towards alternative treatments. Despite trying various types of alternative treatments, he succumbed to his disease.

William had a difficult time as he was dying. From the numerous house visits, I could see that he was afraid to face death and to accept his own mortality. He was fearful of the unknown after death. What was there waiting for him? Would he exist after death?

He diverted his remaining energy resisting, resulting in more frustrations and despair.

In contrast, 72-year old Jane who was a former nurse had a peaceful death. She died from a terminal chronic obstructive airway disease as a result of heavy smoking during her younger days.

Towards the end of her days, Jane accepted that she was dying and instructed her loved ones not to attempt any heroic resuscitation on her. Instead, they should let her go naturally and peacefully.

Common characteristics

In short, a good death can be achieved when a person is fully accepting that death is inevitable and that it's a part of the living process. Better still if he/she believes that we are in essence spiritual beings, not just a physical entity.

By fully accepting death and it being a part of a life cycle, we would not cling on to our dying body. This process allows us to let go of our attachments to this physical existence. It lets us focus our remaining energy to prepare ourselves for the next step – the transition into another existence. Whether you believe in a single life or many lives and rebirth, the next step is essentially a transition from a physical existence to a spiritual one.

That brings us to the knowledge or belief in our spirituality. Without this, it is truly very difficult to see death in a positive way. When we believe in our spirituality, or when we know deep within that we are essentially a spiritual being, then death can even be something to look forward to. After all, discarding an old and weak physical body that is full of pain for something newer and better should not be too difficult.

Thus, whether we are going to experience an easy death or a difficult one depends on how we view death and how we view ourselves.

There is no pain in death

One of the things most dying people are afraid of is the belief that death may be painful. The truth is that death is painless. This is true regardless of whether you are experiencing a good or a difficult death.

Pain is a physical sensation. It only exists as long as the physical body is intact. At the point of death, there is no pain as the physical body cannot feel anymore physical sensation. Thus even if one is suffering from severe bone pain as a result of the cancer spreading to the bones, the final moment is pain-free. It was evident in Marvin's last breath.

Bring It Out In the Open

Death is a subject that is difficult for most people to talk about, yet when one is dying, the urgency is there. This is true for the dying as well as for his loved ones.

Talking about death and acknowledging it openly make it easier for all involved to accept death as a natural part of the living process. This acceptance helps the dying to let go of his attachments to his own physical body as well as his attachments to those around him. Likewise, it allows his loved ones to let him go in peace, instead of clinging on to him. Not allowing a dying person to go peacefully can cause him to hang on unnecessarily and make it more difficult for him to go peacefully.

A Memorable Death

In some ancient cultures, death is not seen as something dreadful. In fact, it is an event that is worth celebrating. After all, shouldn't we be happy that we are "going home"?

This reminds me of a memorable death of an old lady. She was the mother of one of my regular patients. Being a very religious person, she had approached death in accordance to her faith. During her last hours, a group of her friends was present to chant sermons for her. Soothing recordings of the chanting were also played continuously as the old lady waited for her final moments.

According to her loved ones, she looked radiant when she passed away and all those present were able to sense her departure. The old lady had turned her death into a joyous event!

Learning from this, perhaps we should all remind ourselves that death need not be a dreadful thing and that we can turn it into a joyous and spiritual occasion. We do have a choice, even in death.

Miscellaneous

In a Moment of Anger

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Being able to manage our emotion well is crucial to our health as well as our ability to foster healthy relationships with others, particularly our loved ones.

Recent studies have revealed that the state of our emotional well-being plays an important role in our physical health. For instance, people who are depressed are at a higher risk of a heart attack, and those who have experienced a traumatic event are more likely to report poor physical health, often complaining of tiredness, loss of energy, bodyache and other vague physical symptoms.

Conversely, people with positive attitudes towards life generally feel good about themselves, are more joyous and happy about their lives. A good laugh can lift the spirit up and can even increased the body's resistance to infections. Feeling good about ourselves also makes us comfortable in our relationship with others.

Big Problems Arise From Small Problems

"Big problems arise from small problems;
The wise takes care of all his small problems,
Thus he has no problems."
- Tao

The above is so true, and I'll illustrate it with an example.

Mr Lee wanted to watch TV. His favourite movie was showing. However, his wife wanted him to take her grocery shopping and so reluctantly he obliged.

On the way to the shopping complex, they were caught in a bad traffic congestion, and a trip which normally takes 15 minutes took an hour instead. Being an unwilling shopper, Mr Lee was getting angrier by the minute and was close to a boiling point by the time they reached the shopping complex.

As they entered the car park in the complex, Mr Lee asked his wife to be on the look out for any vacant spot as they drove around. Just then, Mrs Lee's mobile phone rang and she quickly answered the call and continued to chat with her friend.

Meanwhile, Mr Lee spotted an empty parking spot but before he could reach it, another driver quickly reversed into it.

That was the last straw for Mr Lee! He blew his top!

Before he knew it, he started shouting at the driver, using all kinds of foul languages. When his wife tried to calm him down, he turned towards her and started shouting at her, accusing her of chatting on the phone instead of helping him to look for a vacant parking lot.

Naturally that outburst spoiled the outing, and they both completed their grocery shopping in hostile silence.

A Feeling Unacknowledged

Looking back, we can easily see that Mr Lee's outburst occurred because of his frustration at missing his movie. The traffic congestion only made his simmering frustration worse, and the parking incident was the last straw.

Thus, a small frustration has turned into an angry outburst!

Often, unacknowledged feelings such as this simmer within us, and they slowly and silently grow into full blown anger or outbursts when we are least able to control them. It is easier to manage minor frustrations before they become big and unmanageable.

Thus, an effective way to manage our emotion is to quickly identify our feelings and acknowledging them when they arise. This also makes it easier for us to manage the cause or trigger that give rise to the feelings. Of course, this is easier said than done.

To be able to manage and identify our feelings the moment they arise, we need to have constant self-awareness. This can be achieved through meditative practice, journaling or self-reflection. Another method is through feedbacks from those around us.

In A Moment of Anger

In a moment of anger, we often say things we regret later. Unfortunately, words once spoken can never be withdrawn. In this way, many good relationships are scarred, some beyond repair. Thus it is important for us to learn to manage our emotion, particularly our anger.

Likewise, if we are on the receiving end, we need to learn forgiveness for we are not immuned against this same folly. If such outbursts are uncommon, and we know that the perpetrator is remorseful and puts in the effort to improve himself, we should readily forgive him. Why would we want to sacrifice a good relationship just because of a single event?

On the other hand, if this outburst is but one of many, frequent unreasonable outbursts, and we are often made the scapegoat, then we need to re-evaluate the relationship, or seek professional couples therapy.

Summary

In short, big problems in our relationship with others often arise when we ignore or allow them the opportunity to grow. Thus by dealing with them when they are still small and manageable, we can prevent big problems from arising. The trick is to catch them early and this requires a high level of self-awareness. We can improve our self-awareness through the various means mentioned earlier.

Little Things mean a Lot

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan

Each day, in the news, we read about the merging of companies, banks and multinational corporations into ever bigger entities. As they grew bigger, they gain more leverage, more control, and greater monopoly of the markets, thus assuring the slow but steady demise of small concerns. Thus we can easily understand why most people think big is better. So, why are we talking about the little things?

Priority

While thinking big may be good for corporations, the same does not necessary apply to a relationship. In a relationship, thinking small is better.

Thinking small means paying attention to details and taking the pain to make small gestures and actions count – something we often ignore when we deal with people, whether they are our loved ones, our friends or our colleagues. We forget that little things can mean a lot. Although deep in our heart, we know that we value them as significant people in our live, our behaviours and actions don't reflect that.

So, while we may go out of the way to remember a customer's birthday, we forget our spouse's birthday. We remember our client's anniversary but forget our own. We take the extra effort to plan for our client's functions but forget to plan for our child's birthday. We truly believe our family comes first, yet we behave as though our clients are more important to us than our family. What is wrong with us? Where is our priority?

We often console ourselves by saying that we'll make it up to our loved ones with our next bonus, or the next holidays but when the time comes, we never do.

Little Things Mean A Lot

Time and again we fail our family, yet they are always there for us, no matter what. It's time we re-arrange our priorities and do what we know we needed to do – put our family first.

It doesn't take a lot to make our loved ones happy. Very often, small thoughtful gestures mean more to them than monetary value. My 5 year old daughter, for example, would

chose to have me read her a story book than to buy her a toy. My 3 year old son prefers a walk in the park. My wife is happy with a “I love you” card which I sent her occasionally, not just on her birthday or our wedding anniversary.

A Powerful Lesson

I learnt the value of small thoughtful gestures when I was 18. It was the year I represented my country in a student exchange programme to USA. On a flight to New York from Los Angeles, an elderly American sat beside me. When he learned that I was in his country as an exchange student, he paid for my movie on the plane. Though the gesture was small, to me, his act represented an act of kindness to a complete stranger. It was my first impression of the American people. The impression stayed till this very day.

Summary

Caught in the rat race, we often forget that little gestures can leave lasting impressions – impressions that may shape the future thoughts and characters of our kids and loved one. Thus it is good to remind ourselves every so often to review our priorities and see if our actions reflect the priorities in our life. Remember the little things – they mean a lot to our loved ones.

Other Authors

Symptoms of Inner Peace

By Saskia Davis

SymptomsofInnerPeace.net

First identified 25 years ago, the INNER PEACE SYNDROME is sweeping nations, worldwide.

Insidious and highly contagious, it creeps silently through societies, infecting one heart at a time. Though no cure has been found, the following preventative measures have been identified: fear, worry, resentment anger, blame, guilt, self pity, attachment to perceptions, people or things, dishonesty with self or others, negative judgements. Regular practice of any of the foregoing has been found to thwart the onset of the inner peace syndrome. Prevention can be furthered by abstaining from certain attitudes and behaviors.

Here is a list of its symptoms:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment
- A loss of interest in judging other people
- A loss of interest in judging self
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others
- A loss of interest in conflict
- A loss of ability to worry
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others & nature
- Frequent attacks of smiling
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen
- An increased susceptibility to love extended by others and the uncontrollable urge to extend it

WARNING

Be on the lookout for symptoms of inner peace. The hearts of a great many already have been exposed and it is possible that people, everywhere, could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what, up to now, has been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

If you have some or all of the above symptoms, be advised that your condition of inner peace may be too far advanced to be curable. If you are exposed to anyone exhibiting any of these symptoms, remain exposed only at your own risk.

Top 5 Regrets of the Dying

Bronnie Ware

BronnieWare.com

For many years I worked in palliative care. My patients were those who had gone home to die. Some incredibly special times were shared. I was with them for the last three to twelve weeks of their lives.

People grow a lot when they are faced with their own mortality. I learned never to underestimate someone's capacity for growth. Some changes were phenomenal. Each experienced a variety of emotions, as expected, denial, fear, anger, remorse, more denial and eventually acceptance. Every single patient found their peace before they departed though, every one of them.

When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently, common themes surfaced again and again. Here are the most common five:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

This was the most common regret of all. When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people have had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.

It is very important to try and honour at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.

2. I wish I didn't work so hard.

This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret. But as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence.

By simplifying your lifestyle and making conscious choices along the way, it is possible to not need the income that you think you do. And by creating more space in your life, you become happier and more open to new opportunities, ones more suited to your new

lifestyle.

3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.

Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result.

We cannot control the reactions of others. However, although people may initially react when you change the way you are by speaking honestly, in the end it raises the relationship to a whole new and healthier level. Either that or it releases the unhealthy relationship from your life. Either way, you win.

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

Often they would not truly realise the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying.

It is common for anyone in a busy lifestyle to let friendships slip. But when you are faced with your approaching death, the physical details of life fall away. People do want to get their financial affairs in order if possible. But it is not money or status that holds the true importance for them. They want to get things in order more for the benefit of those they love. Usually though, they are too ill and weary to ever manage this task. It is all comes down to love and relationships in the end. That is all that remains in the final weeks, love and relationships.

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realise until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content. When deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again.

When you are on your deathbed, what others think of you is a long way from your mind. How wonderful to be able to let go and smile again, long before you are dying.

Life is a choice. It is YOUR life. Choose consciously, choose wisely, choose honestly. Choose happiness.

15 Things You Should Give Up to be Happy

By Luminita Saviuc

PurposeFairy.com

Here is a list of 15 things, which, if you give up on them, will make your life a lot easier and you'll feel much, much happier. We hold on to so many things that cause us a great deal of pain, stress and suffering – and instead of letting them all go and allowing ourselves to be stress-free and happy, we cling on to them.

Well, not anymore. Starting today, we will give up on all those things that no longer serve us, and we will embrace change. Ready? Here we go!

1. Give up your need to always be right.

There are so many of us who can't stand the idea of being wrong – wanting to always be right – even at the risk of ending great relationships or causing a great deal of stress and pain for us and for others. It's just not worth it. Whenever you feel the “urgent” need to jump into a fight over who is right and who is wrong, ask yourself this question from Dr. Wayne Dyer: ***“Would I rather be right, or would I rather be kind?”*** What difference will that make? Is your ego really that big?

2. Give up your need for control.

Be willing to give up your need to always control everything that happens to you and around you – situations, events, people, etc. Whether they are loved ones, co-workers, or just strangers you meet on the street – just allow them to *be*. Allow everything and everyone to be just as they are and you will see how much better will that make you feel.

“By letting it go, it all gets done. The world is won by those who let it go. But when you try and try. The world is beyond winning.” -- Lao Tzu

3. Give up on blame.

Give up on your need to blame others for what you have or don't have, for what you feel or don't feel. Stop giving your powers away and start taking responsibility for your life.

4. Give up your self-defeating self-talk.

Oh my. How many people are hurting themselves because of their negative, polluted and repetitive self-defeating mindset? Don't believe everything that your mind is telling you – especially if it's negative and self-defeating. You are better than that.

“The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive.” – Eckhart Tolle

5. Give up your limiting beliefs

about what you can or cannot do, about what is possible or impossible. From now on, you are no longer going to allow your limiting beliefs to keep you stuck in the wrong place. Spread your wings and fly!

“A belief is not an idea held by the mind, it is an idea that holds the mind.” -- Elly Roselle

6. Give up complaining.

Give up your constant need to complain about those many, many, *maaaany* things – people, situations and events that make you unhappy, sad and depressed. Nobody can make you unhappy, no situation can make you sad or miserable unless you allow it to. It's not the situation that triggers those feelings in you, but how you choose to look at it. Never underestimate the power of positive thinking.

7. Give up the luxury of criticism.

Give up your need to criticize things, events or people that are different than you. We are all different, yet we are all the same. We all want to be happy, we all want to love and be loved and we all want to be understood. We all want something, and something is wished by us all.

8. Give up your need to impress others.

Stop trying so hard to be something that you're not just to make others like you. It doesn't work this way. The moment you stop trying so hard to be something that you're not, the moment you take off all your masks, the moment you accept and embrace the real you, you will find people will be drawn to you, effortlessly.

9. Give up your resistance to change.

Change is good. Change will help you move from A to B. Change will help you make improvements in your life and also the lives of those around you. Follow your bliss, embrace change – don't resist it.

"Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors for you where there were only walls." — Joseph Campbell

10. Give up labels.

Stop labeling the things, people or events that you don't understand as being weird or different and try opening your mind, little by little. Minds only work when open.

"The highest form of ignorance is when you reject something you don't know anything about." — Dr. Wayne Dyer

11. Give up on your fears.

Fear is just an illusion, it doesn't exist – you created it. It's all in your mind. Correct the inside and the outside will fall into place.

"The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself." -- Franklin D. Roosevelt

12. Give up your excuses.

Send them packing and tell them they're fired. You no longer need them. A lot of times we limit ourselves because of the many excuses we use. Instead of growing and working on improving ourselves and our lives, we get stuck and lie to ourselves, using all kind of excuses – excuses that 99.9% of the time, are not even real.

13. Give up the past.

I know, I know. This one's hard. Especially when the past looks so much better than the present and the future looks so frightening. But, you have to take into consideration the fact that the present moment is all you have and all you will ever have. The past you are now longing for – the past that you are now dreaming about – was ignored by you when it was present. Stop deluding yourself. Be present in everything you do and enjoy life. After all, life is a journey not a destination. Have a clear vision for the future, prepare yourself, but always be present in the *now*.

14. Give up attachment.

This is a concept that, for most of us, is so hard to grasp and I have to tell you that it was for me too (it still is), but it's not impossible. You get better and better at it with time and practice. The moment you detach yourself from all things (and that doesn't mean you give up your love for them – because love and attachment have nothing to do with one another. Attachment comes from a place of fear, while love... well, real love is pure, kind, and selfless; where there is love there can't be fear, and because of that, attachment and love cannot co-exist) you become so peaceful, so tolerant, so kind, and so serene. You will get to a place where you will be able to understand all things without even trying. A state beyond words.

15. Give up living your life to other people's expectations.

Way too many people are living a life that is not theirs to live. They live their lives according to what others think is best for them; they live their lives according to what their parents think is best for them; to what their friends, their enemies and their teachers, their government and the media think is best for them. They ignore their inner voice, that inner calling. They are so busy with pleasing everybody, with living up to other people's expectations, that they lose control over their lives. They forget what makes them happy, what they want, what they need... and eventually, they forget about themselves. You have one life – this one right now – you must live it, own it, and especially don't let other people's opinions distract you from your path.