

Living with your Ego

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Introduction

There is an element of our mind that causes us a tremendous amount of trouble. It's responsible for those thoughts about our behavior which make us miserable and which never seem to relent and go away. It's often called the ego. It is really the conflict between the sense of self that we all have, and the temptation to engage in self-serving behavior leading to immediate pleasurable results and the higher standards of behavior we hold for ourselves. For utility, I'll simply call it the ego. Learning to deal with the ego's repetitive thoughts is a necessary step that leads towards enlightenment. If you can make this step, you'll be healthier and probably live longer, because you will have eliminated a huge source of stress.

If you've studied this type of material previously and have your own methods and techniques, you will best benefit by applying critical thought and by matching what you already know with concepts that I will explain. Just remember, there is no absolutely perfect way to approach this subject. If there were, we'd find that the many diverse books on the topic would easily be summarized into a single, one-size-fits-all approach. That isn't the case. Just as some approaches work well for some people and not for others, you may find that this discussion will work well for you or perhaps not so well.

Thought Control

Let's take some time to discuss how to get control over our mental activity and how we can learn to live from a position of happiness and calmness. We need to spend some time working on this, as it is often the biggest obstacle when trying to reach a fully relaxed state. I believe that this is most important and I want you to be sure to at least learn that there is another, better way to exist in this world.

We are constantly hassled and pushed around by circumstances and we internalize much of what happens to us. If not dealt with correctly, we can build up a huge load of negative feelings and thoughts which act to keep us on edge and unhappy. I'll state categorically that giving our ego too much control causes all of our problems with incorrect thinking.

We will deal with this material repeatedly and in various ways. The personal problems engendered by negative, ego-controlled thinking are at the heart of all social ills we face today. If you read the newspaper or get your news on the Internet, you know what I mean. Day after day it becomes more and more important that we, as multiple societies of individuals all forced to occupy the same world, learn to change our thinking from the old Homo sapiens-type pattern of violence, ego, outrage, and vengeance to the new pattern of universal love and acceptance. This pattern is a characteristic of the new species of man that Edgar Mitchell and John White call, "Homo-Noeticus" or as Dr. David Hawkins says, "Homo-Spiritus."

Being oriented towards our Universal Source is a direction that we take in our lives. It's not a destination. It's remarkably easy for us to be overcome by the immediacy of our physical existence. We are terribly susceptible to what Jesus called the "Prince of the World." While you might be tempted to believe that he was speaking of Satan with this phrase, I believe that he more properly could be understood as meaning that we are seduced by our perceived reality into believing that our body is our only resource. When we blame something called "evil," we're thinking in the wrong direction. There are no evil entities as such. There are only minds moving away from Universal Source. There's only good and absence of good. If you think in terms of

good and evil, you are dividing the world into two categories and this action means that you are dividing Universal Source into two categories. It can't be divided. Any attempt to do so will inevitably cause ego-type problems.

When we habitually think in a certain pattern, that pattern impacts the part of our mind that is goal directed and that directs our daily actions, thus, better thinking leads to better life results. This is something that we all need. At this point, if you are tempted to think, "Yes, those other guys in the other political group, or religious group, or nation, or race, or tribe, etc. really need to change," you need to stop and realize that you've just identified yourself as a large part of the problem. This type of thinking is an ego energizing thought which leads inevitably to conflict and discontent. The ego loves that. It survives on that type of discordant energy. It's common in our society to worry about people having a "healthy" ego or good self-esteem. Despite what you may have learned in school, your ego is not you, it's not really your friend and it's not good for you. It doesn't mean well for you and it will, at times, actively work towards your destruction, both physical and spiritual.

I realize that these are difficult concepts to grasp, but it's very important that you understand that ego is a function of the older part of our brain structure. The old reptilian portion of our brain is solely concerned with ego-based thoughts that are exclusively related to survival, personal power, aggression, soul-less sexual activity, and possession of material goods. If you aren't in a conflict situation, that part of your brain will attempt to cause conflict by emphasizing thoughts that attach you to your body, to your possessions, to scarcity, to lack and these thoughts lead to conflict and guilt. When you are at peace and as Wayne Dyer says, "In-Spirit," your mind is peaceful and you realize that only your relationship with Universal Source is real. Only that leads to happiness. As the Course in Miracles says, the only lack we need to correct is our sense of separation from God. If we can correct that, all else falls into place in our lives.

Please understand that there is a better way to live. We can have peace and happiness. It's not easy at first and even if you achieve success at this, you sometimes still are prey to ego driven thoughts.

So, why are we emphasizing the unsuitability of ego-driven thoughts for people who want a better, more relaxed life? It's not easy to successfully calm your mind and relax when you're thinking these types of thoughts. So we need to find out how to overcome the incessant mental activity that is caused by the ego. I don't want to set the ego up as our dire enemy. It is a necessary part of our existence, without which we wouldn't survive in the physical world. However, in our attempts to develop spiritually, it becomes a problem because it mostly gets in the way of controlling our thoughts. Spirit doesn't need ego to survive, because there is no threat that Universal Spirit must combat. In order for us to move our thoughts closer to that level, however, we need to work at phasing our ego out of our thought patterns. Ideally, it should simply fade and become a left-behind part of our development that can be recalled, but is no longer needed.

Many people fail to relax and meditate successfully because they haven't fully learned how to control their mental activity. The typical person, when asked about meditation, will mention that they can't just stop thinking about things. Here are some ideas about thinking which can help you to start controlling your thoughts.

First, we have a strong tendency to believe that we are our thoughts and we take ownership of our thoughts. Let's get this over right here: You are not your thoughts and you don't even own them. If you owned them, you'd have control over them. Right? But, arguably, you don't have control. Try not to think of a white bear for a few minutes.

There is a part of your being that generates mental activity. Your brain is ideally designed to amplify that activity, but it really isn't the source. You're now saying, "What's the source then." I think that much mental activity originates on an atomic or molecular level with changes in the

quantum level energy field in which we exist. Yes. I know that this sounds like some kind of scientific put-on, but on a basic level, all we are, all that all matter is, is an energy field. If you read any popular description of quantum physics, you'll find that an electron in an atom in our brain can be viewed as potentially being located anywhere in the entire universe. It doesn't have to exclusively circle closely about its atomic nucleus. If this is the case, it's entirely possible (this is a totally speculative statement as any physicist will tell you) that our thoughts may be impacted by the thoughts of other people. Well, maybe it's not so speculative at that. Even though we don't as yet fully understand the underlying mechanism, there's enough historical and anecdotal evidence for psychic events that we're obliged to consider them as possible. It's also possible that other types of fluxes in the quantum energy field initiate our thoughts. I don't know if anyone is aware of the specific physical or non-physical events leading to thoughts. But, I do know that we often have thoughts that come into our mind and take control of us causing us to feel unhappy or upset. When we have a chain of thoughts that lead to our feeling upset, our ego is strengthened and tends to take over those thoughts. This leads to repetitive daydreams or circular thoughts that feed on themselves and leave us feeling miserable and upset.

So, how do thoughts grow after the initial seed thought?

I was given the following image of how thoughts grow during a deep meditation state. Envision your mind as if it were a large bed of hot ashes with numerous small sparks being thrown off. Each spark represents a seed thought which can flare up into a flame or simply fades out. Some of these sparks may be caused by our actions, our memories, or our plans, others may occur due to energy fields to which we're subjected and still others may be totally random. I think that this part of our mind is so sensitive that it may be influenced by energy in other people's thoughts. Normally, a thought must become a fair sized flame in order for us to become cognizant of it and most of us seem to learn how to automatically dampen thoughts that are noticeably those of others. Otherwise we'd all display more psychic behavior. Regardless of this, we can actually learn to recognize sparks that are not friendly to our being and extinguish them before they gain any size and influence.

Now, in the above analogy, I introduced two ideas many people will find incredible and may have difficulty believing. That is, our thoughts can be friendly or to our being or not; and we can simply snuff out undesirable ones. Trust me here. This is exactly the case. With regard to friendly thoughts, have you ever been beset by negative thoughts that cycled repeatedly through a whole litany of reasons why you couldn't be or do or deserve something? You know what I'm speaking of here. Those thoughts served to keep you from attempting some action under the guise of convincing you that you'd be unsuccessful. Keep in mind that Wayne Gretsky, the hockey great, said, "I miss 100% of the shots I don't take."

Dr. David Hawkins says that our ego subsists on the negative emotions it raises with self-destructive thoughts. We all have the same brain structure and it is predisposed, you might even say, "designed" to create this type of thinking. These thoughts are responsible for 100% of the discord in the world. All humans are subject to them. We're designed to have them and we should never be surprised or humiliated that they occur. However, we all need to learn to live with them without allowing them power over us and our true existence, our true selves.

How do you stop a negative thought from growing? I liken it to setting up a low-level filter that will become automatic after some practice. It notices that a thought carries a negative valence or spin and simply turns your attention to another topic. The negative thought will die without you feeding energy into it. It's much harder to describe than it is to do, so have faith. Now that you know it can be done, you're a fair part of the way towards doing it. David Hawkins provides a second way to avoid the negative impact on our true self. He states that we simply have to learn to avoid becoming energized by the negativity. If we reject the excitement, the negative emotions, the thoughts will eventually be starved out of existence. You must work at this every day for the rest of your life, if you want peace.

As you progress in this personal quest, you'll find that you begin to have a great distaste for popular media. Novels with graphic violence and sex become uninteresting. And, television... Let's not even attempt to go there. Today, many video dramas leave me with a feeling of having wallowed in filth. However, I find that I enjoy family rated and non-negative films even more than before. Hollywood will be very much against people learning to live with their thoughts in the fashion I've discussed. Most of the films now produced would have absolute no audience in a world where people had that type of mental control.

Perhaps your mind dwells on negative thoughts about how depressed you are or how much you're insulted by what someone said. What actually does the damage is your decision to take ownership of these thoughts. If you're able to stand back and simply and impartially observe the thought come into your mind, pass through and then out without owning it, you will have learned a great secret about mental control and happiness in life.

It might help if you view it this way. Someone says something hurtful to you. Their mouth moves and creates some vibrations in the air. These vibrations travel through the air and eventually reach your eardrum and it vibrates and passes the vibration through your ear mechanism to the hair cells that are attached to nerves. This creates a neural impulse that goes to your auditory cortex and there is interpreted as meaningful words. As far as you really are concerned, you only become aware of the meaning some while after the event and then your ego takes over and chooses to interpret the vibrations as something that threatens your self-esteem. If you think about it correctly, you'll realize that such vibrations cannot even harm your body. The harm comes from your thoughts about them. What if you miss-heard the statement and thought they were being disparaging, when they were actually being complimentary? Your thoughts would then create conflict in the same fashion as if they had intended hurt. Why would you allow yourself to be at the mercy of your ego if there is another, more peaceful way to exist?

What if you have some definite worries about tasks that have to be done during your daily life. Many people spend time rehearsing tasks to be done tomorrow. If you're sufficiently worried about these tasks, you will find your mind rehearsing and moving in a circle over and over the same thought sequence. How do you stop that? It's already reached a point where it's out of control and can't be simply filtered out. This is another ego attack that is deviously hidden in what might be construed as sensible worries about tasks you must face. I've personally learned to recognize when my thoughts are attempting to make me unhappy or upset. For a number of years, I asked God for help with this situation by mentally shouting, "Help! Help! Help!" I now recognize an attack of this source and am now better able to turn it off by concentrating on the falsity of it.

Here's where another technique that I call, "the shelf method" works very well. Imagine a shelf floating in space before you. Take your concerns and place them individually on the shelf knowing that they'll be held safely there for you to examine when you wish and at the correct time. You can take one down and examine it and then return it to the shelf when you're done. This has the effect of getting the concerns out of the loop and allowing you a chance to get some rest. If you like, you can ask God to hold the problems for you. It will be done quite cheerfully and no problem is too heavy for the strength available.

What if you have regrets that you can't resolve? Ego loves making you feel guilty. A similar method works well. Robert Monroe calls this the "energy conversion box." Imagine a box and make it very vivid and distinct in your mind. It can be very elaborate. Mine is a wooden bench seat that has been painted many times and has chips knocked off of it so that it shows different colors of paint. It also has a large hasp that allows for a padlock to hold it closed. Approach the box that you've imagined and individually remove each regret or problem you never want to see again and place it inside. Each thought or regret will fold and fit neatly on the bottom of the box. Close and lock the box. When you later return, the thought process that was causing the trouble will be flattened and converted to a source of energy for you. If a regret comes back, just put it

back in the box. Repeat this as many times as necessary. It'll eventually leave you alone and at that point you will find that it's converted into positive spiritual energy for you.

We all have a constant flow of thoughts through our mind. I used to find it helpful to play music to myself mentally, not lyrics, but just the music. A good repeating phrase of music allows you to occupy the repeater part of your mind without inadvertently thinking thoughts that might damage your peace of mind. However, this is a rather basic technique that shouldn't be thought of as being the best. Once you begin to exercise some control, you can step back and simply observe the way your thoughts are engendered by your perception and beliefs of and about the outside world.

Keep practicing. Eventually, the negativities will no longer be able to affect you and that's when you really begin to live and enjoy yourself. It's been said that a man with the right type of mental existence can be happy even if he's being tortured physically. As an example of this, the literature is full of people who've been able to go through extensive surgery without anesthesia.

That's what this is all about. We all have a God-given right to peace-of-mind. Unfortunately, most of us don't know this and don't know how to achieve it. At this point, I've given you enough to allow you to get suitable control to successfully engage in the guided meditation. However, I warn you, once you start to exercise some control and see some benefits, this process will become important to you. I've worked at it for most of my life, much of the time without even knowing what I was attempting to accomplish. With the information I've just given you, you should be far ahead of the game. Next we will deal with several specific problems people often encounter.

The Geronimo Effect

Now it's time for us to deal with a topic that may make you uncomfortable. How's your conscience? Are there issues there with your past behavior which may be keeping you from achieving peace of mind? I'm serious about this. It will be necessary for you to resolve any mental issues you have before you're able to gain some degree of mental control.

Geronimo was born in 1829 in western New Mexico. He was an Apache medicine man and one of the most feared warriors of the time. He was the leader of the last American Indian fighting force to formally capitulate to the US Army. He engaged in many battles prior to being captured in 1886. He once said, "I have killed many... but I don't know how many, for frequently I have not counted them." I once read that in his later years before his death in 1909, he slept poorly and was said to groan and clench his teeth while asleep, due to his feelings about the deaths. He was also quoted as saying, "I cannot think that we are useless or God would not have created us. There is one God looking down on us all... The sun, the darkness, the winds are all listening to what we have to say."

The point I'm making here is that even a stone-cold killer who by all accounts spared neither man, nor woman, nor child still had to pay mentally for his behavior, just as, hopefully in a lesser fashion, do we.

It is a relatively common occurrence for people who have died and then come back to life to speak of a life review that is caused by a being of light questioning them about their life. It's also a Christian tradition that people who die will have a final accounting of their lives. Most Christian churches make some effort at freeing people from suffering for their sins by the ritual of communion. This can help. However, depending on your personality and beliefs, it may not be totally adequate. You can know that the church and God have forgiven you, but you can still condemn yourself.

Carlos Castenada writes that his mentor, Don Juan told him that he had to take as long as it required and recapitulate his life. He was to write out literally every recollection he had about every single personal interaction in which he had participated in his whole life. Once he had done this, he could destroy the records and he would be free of all the emotional and psychic baggage the interactions had caused. Now this is interesting because it implies that one need not wait for death before reviewing their life.

In fact there are some serious benefits that accrue to those who do this review while still living. The better a review you carry out, the more apt you are to become free.

Unless you're so advanced that you have led a faultless life, you've undoubtedly got a large list of things you've done or failed to do that your ego uses as ammunition to make you suffer. Recapitulation of these things can set you free from ego-induced guilt. Perhaps you've only done a few trivial things you regret. Perhaps you've got a long laundry list of things that you're horribly ashamed of. However it is for you, unless you're a sociopath or perfect, you've got a list. You don't even have to pretend you don't, in fact you can't, because this issue isn't between you and me, it's only between you and your higher self.

At this point, if you're thinking something like, "I sure wish that I hadn't pulled Suzie's pigtails in the third grade" you're starting to get the picture. However you need to be more complete than this. If you're serious about spiritual development, you'll need to work on this diligently. It may take several months. One way to proceed is to take a separate notebook page for every year of your life and write out everything you did during that year which you regret or know was not well meant. Of course, the first few years won't have anything on their pages, but you may need multiple pages for some of the latter ones. Once you've completed this list, and I recommend that you keep it to yourself, you can burn it while dedicating it to God. With the flames you can visualize the bad deeds and regrets being burned in your memory. God will accept the gift and will help you forgive yourself provided you're sincere.

Part of the reason for making such a detailed effort is to ensure that you are sincere. It is also possible for some people to do this recapitulation mentally although it can be easy to forget issues which may later pop up and cause you some difficulty with your ego.

There is no substitute for doing this exercise. If you're going to advance, you must do it. If you're Christian, by all means, enlist the aid of communion to help and pray to God for forgiveness, but do this also. I'm not going to ask you to complete this exercise right now, but I'm telling you that you will have to eventually complete it, while you're alive or after you're dead. You might as well do it now, because you'll be amazed at how much better you'll feel.

So how can we do this mentally? At this juncture, I'd like you to think of the worst, most egregious thing you've done to someone else in the last year. Imagine it in detail. Imagine the other person's feelings in detail and how your behavior made them feel towards you. Do you have a sense of regret? Do you feel bitter because no amount of regret will erase the act? Think about this for a minute.

Now package the whole act up into a neatly wrapped bundle and offer it up to God while asking for forgiveness. Know that your behavior was a result of ignorance and moving away from God. You now know better and will not repeat this act. God accepts your gift and will guide you in dealing with similar situations that may arise in the future so that you won't be allowed to repeat this act. You can forgive yourself, knowing that you erred but that you won't err in such a fashion again.

Do you see how powerful this action can be? Do you feel better, even just a little bit better? You've just taken one piece of your ego's ammunition and gotten rid of it in a fashion that your ego won't be able to counter. That's one less thought which you will have to worry about in the future. If the thought comes up again, just do the same exercise again and it'll leave you alone.

Once you've dealt with this list of acts, you'll find that it's much easier to gain mental control and it will be much easier to meditate and even sleep.

The Place of No Pity

This is the name that Don Juan called a particularly desirable mental state. He engaged in a number of stratagems to help Carlos reach this state. Ultimately, our emotional and spiritual development reaches a point where it is essential to delete all vestiges of self-pity. Our ego uses this device to provide sustenance for itself and if one were to look closely, it can be seen at the root of almost all undesirable behaviors from personal problems to cultural ones.

Lets look at the Palestinians as a great cultural example currently in the news. They are the world's most consummate victims. The press constantly speaks of cycles of violence in the mid-east. This whole problem would resolve easily if the participants could get rid of their self-pity. The thought that I've been wronged and deserve better leads inexorably to thoughts of vengeance and these thoughts manifest in ineffectual but vicious violence. Whenever a person or a group feels they've been victimized, they are prone to self-pitying thoughts and these thoughts feed the ego and lead to a cyclical mode of existence moving from victim to aggressor and back again. Of course, the actual expression of violence against another is not something that somewhat more spiritually advanced people come to easily. That's why western cultures repeatedly fail to recognize the roots of the mid-east problem.

This type of violence is predominant in tribal-type situations where the thinking is based on my tribe versus your tribe. Your tribe is always bad and mine is always good. The violence is so rooted in primitive-type thinking that it is usually of the rock-throwing type. Two crowds face off and someone in one crowd throws a rock. Anonymous violence leads people to more easily loose their personal sense of self-restraint. Then someone in the other crowd responds with another rock. This gradually cycles upward until more and more people are involved. The egos of both groups are gratified by the emotional buzz they get from the conflict and usually neither group is sufficiently harmed so that the conflict stops with a clear-cut victory and loss. Just remember that Buddha said, "Revenge is like a man carrying a hot coal in his hand to throw at his enemy."

Today, the mid-east is filled with high-tech rock throwers. One group lobs a Katushya rocket and the other drops a few bombs. Back and forth the conflict goes. Much of the rest of the world is drawn in by the emotions. The tendency is for the rest of the world to try to settle the conflict with a cease-fire before either side is irrevocably damaged. However, the combatants' own thinking has already damaged both sides.

We might wonder what can be done if one group wants to break off the conflict, but the other one won't quit. When this occurs between siblings, we, as parents, usually separate the two by sending them to their rooms. Eventually the kids grow out of this phase. When this occurs between countries or ethnic groups, the separation is much more difficult and can lead to an even more bloodthirsty resumption of the violence. I can only think that an enforced cease-fire paired with an enforced re-education of the populace would be the only effective resolution. The re-education would take the place of siblings' natural growth out of a conflict-oriented phase to one where they appreciated each other. Here is where we tread on the long-term effects of religion. I believe that religion is at best a somewhat ineffective means of approaching God and at worst is a great means of enforcing tribal-type thinking. A typical attitude is, "My religion is better than yours, you heathen!" We've got to grow past that state if we want to survive. Fortunately, there are some signs that Homo sapiens is gradually changing into Homo-noeticus, which will hopefully be a more spiritually based creature with less propensity towards violence.

On a personal level, we might have reached the developmental level where we realize violence is unacceptable, but we can still feed our ego through self-pitying thoughts. We might, for example, think that we've been wronged so we deserve to eat a quart of ice cream or purchase something for ourselves or engage in some particular self-defeating type of behavior. It's easy to justify doing things you know you shouldn't, when you feel you're making up for being treated poorly. After all, you deserve it, poor you! Once you've engaged in self-pitying behavior, you find that you must either hide it from the world and yourself or you must actively justify it. Either way, you suffer and your ego feeds on the emotional buzz. The strategy works for the ego, it survives and you loose in your attempt to find a peaceful life.

Anger

Anger is ego's primary means of expressing itself. It is caused by self-pity although sometimes the pity is masked. For instance, when a person gets angry because someone else does some egregious act not directly related to the first person, the self-pity is masked by thoughts of the type, "They should know better than to act that way!"

Expecting someone else to act in what you perceive is a reasonable manner and then being offended when they do not has the same root thought as victim-hood. "The other person is responsible for my being upset." You are then placing your well being in the hands of another and abdicating self-responsibility.

Of course, when the egregious act is directed at oneself, it is easier to see the self-pity at work. It's also easier to become angry, although you may recognize that it is socially less acceptable to be angry with the offender. There is a bit of guilt at work here, because we tend to think that we can be angrier with someone who offends against a law or another person, than we can if they offend against us. At least this occurs in social situations. We believe that people will judge us as unable to "take it" or hypersensitive if we respond overly to a personal slight. Either way the ego wins because we are upset and loose our self-peace.

The other reason for our propensity to show more righteous anger towards a social offense, by which I mean an offense directed at the laws or mores of society, is the tribal-type thinking that is involved. It seems to strengthen our anger when we have our tribal group behind us providing support. Tribal-type thinking leads to all kinds of awful us vs. them conflicts. We're always the good guys and the other group is always bad or evil. Our side considers it acceptable and even desirable to damage the evil group. What a great recipe for conflict! It leads to attempts to outdo our friends in aggression. Patriotism is a concept created especially for this type of thinking. It provides even more justification for hating the other group. Love of home is a normal human emotion that arises from the same emotional set as love of family. It is a thought mechanism without which man would not have survived in the past. However, today we are starting to see that, regardless of whether it is a valid emotion or not, it must be offset with a feeling of identity with or love for the greater body of mankind. We must stop and realize that we are all the same under our skins.

If we were to take a sampling of every human group on the planet and reduce them to their chemical components, we would not find any significant differences between them. Every human on the planet bleeds red blood when cut. We're all the same. I personally believe that God creates us and a portion of God resides in each of us. Therefore, if you love God, you must love every other human on the planet. To not do so simply isolates you from God and you will begin to try and replace this relationship with emotional systems that are not as valid or satisfying. Patriotism and love of family are examples of this type of emotion. There is a whole gamut of other emotions used for the same purpose ranging downward in energy level until they reach the low energy of pure hate for the other guys. Don't subscribe to this type of thinking. Know that we're all part of God. We're all beautiful to someone who learns to see past our material

packages and we all want the same thing once you cut out all the propaganda and misguided thinking. We all want to be aligned with and close to God in our daily thinking and lives.

Causality

In fact ego's survival is dependent upon our belief in causality. The pervasive belief in causality is responsible for all murders, all arguments, all hurt feelings, all self-pitying, victim-type behavior. When you believe that your personal status is directly dependent upon the behavior of other people, you feel justified in attacking them in some fashion when you imagine that you've been wronged.

Imagine for a moment that you believe in the philosophical concept of solipsism. This is the idea that you are all that exists and that everything, all other persons and events that you perceive are only happening in your imagination. If you are persistent enough in believing in this position, it is impossible to convert you to any other mode of thought. The solipsistic position cannot be disproved by logic. So, if you've suffered a wrong at someone's hands, it's only in your imagination. What sense would it make, then to rant and rail at an imaginary opponent? It would do no good, of course. The solipsistic position would be that, "I'm doing this to myself." You can't really blame yourself, can you?

Ok. But what does this have to do with reality? That's the point. Reality isn't what we normally believe it is. We think that striking the cue ball so that it strikes the eight ball knocks the eight ball into the corner pocket. When someone says something hurtful, they're responsible for our mental sensation of hurt and thus responsible for our vengeful acts against them arising from our thoughts.

Causality breaks down when we look at matter on a sub-microscopic quantum level. In fact, quantum effects even impact our normal macroscopic world. The path of the eighth pool ball in a chain of eight impacts cannot be calculated. This is due to the movements of electrons on the surfaces of all eight balls introducing sufficient randomness into the system to preclude prediction. This is all well and good, but why not use causality as a working hypothesis? That's what our ancestors did and it worked for them. In fact, without the hypothesis of causality, we wouldn't survive. We would walk out in front of automobiles or try to pat saber-toothed tigers. However, and this is a big however, this hypothesis breaks down when applied to our mental events. Clinging to it keeps us from developing spiritually and engenders all sorts of mental anguish.

When someone says that you are unattractive, for instance, you have a mental self-pitying response. You may realize that you are unattractive or you may know that you are attractive, but think that they're being unfair. Either way, you resent their statement. If you are able to divorce their statement from you, and let it pass by without response, you'll find that you will be a lot happier. There are hundreds of stories and aphorisms about this, ranging from, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt Me." to tales such as the following:

Buddha was traveling with another man who decided to test him. For days the other man had heaped insults and vituperation upon Buddha. Buddha always simply smiled and behaved in a pleasant manner as if the other person was only commenting about the weather. Finally, after days, the other man was exhausted and, having failed to elicit a negative response from Buddha, asked him, "How do you stand it? I've been as insulting to you as I know how, yet you're always pleasant." Buddha responded, "When a person gives you a gift and you refuse to accept it, who then does it belong to?"

Think of it this way: The other person uses their mouth to make some vibrations in the air. The vibrations travel to you and you eventually perceive them. You choose how to interpret them. If

you don't speak the same language, the vibrations have no meaning. If you've learned to avoid speaking in the calculus of personal insult and self-pity, the vibrations are meaningless to you. The intent of the vibrations says everything about the person originating them and nothing about you, so why react?

Well, you are now thinking that this all sounds good, but you know that when you're insulted it makes you angry and justifiably so. This type of thinking is just an excuse. You've just bought into your old behavior and reinforced it. You know that it makes you unhappy. You know that you're trying to develop spiritually, or you wouldn't be reading this material. You know rationally that anger isn't good for you. It raises your blood pressure and has numerous unhealthy effects. You know that it's better to turn the other cheek and love your neighbor, but... There's always that caveat: "But."

So what I'm asking is for you to go over these thoughts until you can repeat all of them to yourself and to anyone you speak to. When you've mastered the material so that you can repeat it, it will gradually begin to sink into your world-view. It will eventually become part of you, so to speak, so that you will find yourself behaving in the recommended fashion more and more often. As you do, you'll find that things become more peaceful and you're more in tune with your Ultimate Source. I would be very surprised if this mode of thinking and behaving just slipped into your mind and took over instantly (although it does sometimes happen quickly for the lucky few). I'd also be envious, because it's taken me a whole long time to even start to get to this mode of existence.

Finances

It's been noted that the love of money is the root of all evil. Now I don't think that this is exactly true, although there is considerable truth in it, but most assuredly the fear of financial problems is responsible for a tremendous loss of sleep and peace of mind in our society. The best way of combating this type of fear and worry is to not have any financial problems. However, that is pretty easy to say, but not too easy to do.

In order to deal with these problems as expeditiously as possible, I suggest that you use the Shelf Technique. Simply ask God to provide an etheric shelf to hold your problems for the night. Don't worry. They'll still be there and you won't forget them. However, carrying them all night is tiresome. God can bear them much more easily than you. So take each problem or each aspect of the problem and carefully wrap it up and place it on the shelf. Once you've mastered this idea. You'll find that you can lay problems on the shelf and your mind will be freed of constantly worrying about them. You'll get some rest and you can pick any of the problems up off the shelf individually, examine it, decide what the next step in solving it must be, implement the step, and then place the problem back on the shelf for later work. It's much easier to work with them in this fashion.

In another essay I deal with the law of attraction so all that we need to address here is the universal law that states we get more of what we concentrate on. This is particularly important when it comes to financial problems. In our society, finances have taken on an extremely important role, much more so than in many other "more primitive" societies across the world. Our whole self-worth often seems to be bound up in our financial success or lack thereof.

When we concentrate on lack, the universal law states that we create more lack in our lives. There are numerous stories of people who have come from a position of lack into plenty by simply changing their thoughts. The book "*The Science of Getting Rich*" by Wallace Wattles offers a particularly good understanding with which to start getting control of your thoughts and finances.

The important steps towards controlling your worry about finances are to place individual worries on a shelf, deal with worries one-at-a-time, and to start concentrating on thoughts of plenty rather than thoughts of lack. The third step is the most difficult since most of us have been taught to concentrate on the results we're getting in life rather than the results we'd like to get. Sometimes a shock treatment is necessary to abruptly change our focus. We can provide this stimulus by purchasing something we've wanted but didn't think we can afford. This change in our circumstances may be the very thing needed to change our focus onto how we're more valuable than we've thought and onto how we can move our finances in a positive direction.

"Now" Is What It Is

It's obviously true that the moment called "Now" is the only thing that actually exists for us. The past is in our memory and isn't firmly fixed as we can forget or miss-remember elements of it. The future is in our imagination, since we don't know for sure what is going to happen.

Creativeness is that element of our mental processes which allows us to imagine a better or worse future and the steps that it would take to actually have that future materialize. It's also only in our imagination. This is how humans differ qualitatively from other animals. A dog can't imagine how it might make his life better to have a dog-controllable dog-food-can opener.

So, worry or anxiety is a misuse of creativeness. Worry simply turns creativeness into a tool for the ego to generate emotional energy on which to feed. It means that we imagine a future situation, which will not be friendly to us. We elaborate on the details. Our ego forces us to continue to dwell on the negative aspects. As we dwell on these aspects, we enhance their likelihood for materialization.

The cure is to live in the "Now." The only thing we actually have is this moment. Realize that projecting negative outcomes on future situations is deleterious to your health. We can, however, use imagination to enhance the possibility of a positive future event or outcome. This is the same process as worry, but it's turned to positive aspects only. We envision a future that is friendly to us and we then utilize that vision to call us into the correct pathway and actions to reach it.

When you're worried, remember to look around and take stock in both your external and internal environment - it's actually all you have. The possibility of future negative outcomes is only a possibility and once you know about it, you can take steps to move toward a future with a positive outcome. Each step comes in the eternal "Now."

Conclusion

Now that we've gone over the basics, your assignment is to take one concept and start to practice it in your life. When you've mastered that idea, take the next and work on it. Don't take on too much at once or you'll feel overwhelmed and be tempted to quit altogether.

The take-home-lesson from this entire essay is that, contrary to popular experience, your thoughts aren't equal to reality. They don't even really belong to you. They're just representations of reality in the same way that a shadow is a distorted representation. Your shadow cast by the sun is sort of recognizable as you, but it really isn't you. It doesn't have the abilities you do, it isn't able to do what you do, and it has none of the properties that you do.

Reality is always distorted by our perception as filtered through our ego. Once you take this to heart, you're on the way of uncoupling the crippling link negative thoughts have with our happiness.