

# Negativity

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## NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Negative feelings are acids that eat away Will and Purpose. If the higher Will and Purpose aspect of our Being is to be awakened and in daily use, then negative feelings must be acknowledged and discarded.

Will cannot operate without Purpose. Higher Purpose will not be visible whilst our inner sight is clouded by negative thoughts.

Being, apparently, at the mercy of our negative feelings, or having, apparently, justifiable reasons for our negative thoughts, involves both mind and heart acting in unison, and that is why negative thinking has such a powerful, obvious and appallingly destructive effect on Life.

If we could remove all these negative thoughts and feelings entirely – then add unclouded Purpose - which would automatically attract to itself its other half, Will – what could we **not** achieve!

Judgement pre-supposes absolutes. To start with, Love is the **only absolute** Absolute.

So, without absolutes there can only be `evaluation`, `discrimination` and `discernment`.

## PREJUDICE AND GULLIBILITY

To the extent that we are prejudiced and judgemental, so are we gullible. Prejudice leaves us wide open to being taken advantage of because gullibility is the other side of this coin.

A prejudiced state of mind is forever looking for a quick, correct, opinion through pre-judging, i.e. judging before thinking. This is a form of mental laziness.

Just as prejudice is a form of mental laziness – wanting a quick answer because we do not want to put the necessary energy into the necessary time needed to learn all about the subject before finalising an opinion and expressing it – so is being gullible. Here we want an instant correct decision without spending any time or energy on coming to a conclusion and our conclusion is based on nothing more than wishful thinking.

Prejudice is the wish to think unreasonably ill of a person or situation in order to get the matter settled in one's mind quickly and move on. Gullibility is to trust unreasonably in another's good

opinion of a person or situation because we want to feel good quickly and do not want to spend the time or energy in getting to a reliable opinion ourselves.

Prejudice and gullibility are thus the same thing – just different ends of the same stick! Evaluation is the answer! But that takes time and energy and attention and a desire to find the truth in a person or situation which we so often feel we have neither the time, the interest, nor the inclination to do.

It follows then that judgement is a form of `chosen` ignorance. Self-education is time consuming – to accept ignorance and judge is preferable because we get an instant result - ignorance is bliss.

*“The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the slightest distinction, however, and Heaven and Earth are set infinitely apart. If you wish to see the truth, then hold no opinions for or against anything. To set up what you like against what you dislike is the disease of the mind.”*  
Sengcan, Hsin Hsin Ming

The secret to resolving this dilemma is to:

**“SUSPEND judgement.”**

## TO KNOW OR NOT TO KNOW

We have all, in the West, been educated `to know`. `Not to know` means you are a fool or an idiot, whilst `to know` means you are intelligent; at school, to become top of the class, you have to “know the answer”.

It is, in our society, admirable to be intelligent and so from birth we are programmed to seek to be thought intelligent – by others, if not ourselves. This is a cruel burden to carry from babyhood and has, for all of us, created problems - phobias, personality oddities, ticks, stammers, anxiety attacks, nightmares, incontinence etc. etc. – at one time or another. Since this conditioning has been going on for the whole of our lives – even from inside the womb – it cannot be removed in one go. It is composed of millions of thoughts, ours and other people`s, spoken, read, and intuited, which we have accepted and they are embedded in our minds, bodies and hearts in layer upon layer. Thus this is not a `thing` but a dynamic, living mixture of our past affecting us every minute of the day.

To root out this `contamination` from our psyche we need to be able to say the words “I DO NOT KNOW” and sincerely feel that it is OK NOT TO KNOW THE ANSWER. We have to learn to say, to ourselves and others, “I don`t know”, without any feeling of being less as a result. This is very difficult and painful to start with but, if persevered with, results in a lessening of tension in everyday life and a simpler appreciation of what is, ultimately, important. It is also a first step in developing humility.

LIFE is the answer – the answer is dynamic – not right or wrong – the answer is always changing – every instant - nothing is fixed.

And thus, so is KNOWING not fixed – for everything is in flux, responding instantly to our every thought and feeling – a buzzing, humming, thrumming, whirling, swirling, spiralling, electrical mass to which

**THERE IS NO ANSWER!**

## NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS

These are two very different things - one we have some control of and the other very little!! So discipline is required.

Negativity starts with a thought. This kindles a feeling. The feeling then gives support to the thought which in turn seeks justification. Justification backs up the feeling which then becomes inflamed. This inflammation spreads, giving more and more support to the original thought. The original thought in turn seeks, and finds, more and more justification for its existence. This, of course, adds fuel to the fire and now we have a conflagration of negative feelings, backed up by very many strong `reasons` for their existence. All this happens in rapid succession – faster than thought.

Negative feelings therefore are originally sown by our acceptance of a negative thought but, in the general mayhem of this process, this fact can be obliterated and we find ourselves left with just overwhelming identification with the negative feeling smouldering or raging away.

Our thoughts come swiftly – faster than we can catch them – and if we wish to catch them we must be honest and alert. Often the first thing that tells us we have had a negative thought is when we get a negative feeling. So, this is the trick: Notice any negative feeling and trace it back to the original negative thought. Then access and deal with this thought at its birth. Assess its validity, evaluate its message. Discern what is going on here – is it projection? – is it prejudice? Respect yourself for having had this thought – there is a reason you have accepted it – it may be a valid reason - and you can then work on what to do about it – however, with calm wisdom, and not inflamed emotions.

This is not an easy thing to do because of the swift and `flitting` nature of the original thought. But the main thing is to know that this whole process did not start with a `feeling`. It started with the willing acceptance of a `thought` devoid of feeling. And if a negative feeling is attached to a thought then you can be pretty sure you have not traced back far enough to reach the original thought – which is “feelingless”.

The point of this work is to free ourselves of negativity which is destructive of ourselves and others and, frankly, unpleasant to experience. It is often believed that it is the negative feelings that are the problem and if we could only eradicate the negative feelings we would be `free`. This is just not possible. **The intellect cannot free us of emotion or feeling** – we cannot `think ourselves` out of negative feelings because it was a thought that landed us in this situation in the first place. The belief that we can leads to repression, suppression, guilt, depression and despair and, worst of all, acting out in some weird and wonderful way.

The negative feelings are not the problem because they are but a reaction to a negative thought! They would never exist without the original negative thought! The only way out of this is to discipline our thought processes - locate and weed out the seeds of this negativity before the negative feelings are generated. Thus, by locating the root cause of the negativity we wish to investigate, we are in a position to be able to choose to extinguish its source by exercising fond discipline over our thoughts and thus end this particular type of negativity.

**Find the first negative thought and deal with it - this is the only true and lasting solution.**

Imagine a basin with the plug in and the tap turned on.

Over time, the basin fills with water and starts to overflow onto the floor, causing a problem.

There are three things we can do here:

1. Mop up the water from the floor with towels or such. However this needs to go on indefinitely and, though helpful, does not solve the problem.
2. Pull out the plug. This is also helpful and gives us time to think, whilst we carry out the mopping up, however it too does not solve the problem.
3. Turn off the tap.

### **THIS SOLVES THE PROBLEM!**

This analogy works pretty well when translated into what we are studying.

The original **idea** to turn on the tap and the **act** of turning on the tap is the **reception** of a thought and the **acceptance** of this thought.

On deciding to accept the thought, a sympathetic resonance is set up with the emotions. The mind and feelings are now joined in a creative endeavour which causes the water to flow out of the tap. This is often the first time we notice that anything is going on and we are, unresistingly, carried along in the direction the feelings/emotions are pointing. The ongoing support of the emotions together with the unfailing reasoning of the intellect results in unremitting exaggeration of both in the direction of `extremism` and the basin is soon full to overflowing.

Symptoms of overflowing are: outbursts of anger, insomnia, bursting into tears, slapping, hitting, kicking, shouting – even at the telephone!, stamping, throwing things – even at the TV!, groaning, grunting, screaming etc. All these are `expressions` of the water overflowing, are mostly aggressive explosions and likely, in the extreme, to be inflicted on others or another. Examples of `implosions` of the water overflowing are: sadness, depression, tiredness, fatigue, lack of interest in life, apathy, not eating, oversleeping, sluggish brain, comfort eating, escapism, self-harm, addictions etc. and are mostly directed at hurting one's self, though also having a damaging effect on all others.

There are many different ways to tackle our negative feelings, of which the above examples of behaviour are but symptoms, but the most important of them is to take responsibility for their existence and **eschew the thought that it is all someone else's fault!** This is seeing the water pouring onto the floor and deciding to do something about it – not running away in fear of the disaster unfolding before our eyes, not denying its existence, not absenting ourselves from involvement in its resolution – but throwing ourselves fully into the situation, free of blame of self or others, simply with a view to making things better.

1. Mopping up the water alone is much like clearing up after an unfortunate outburst of temper or bout of drinking. It involves a lot of self-disgust along with lots of sincere apologies and promises to those around us that we will not do it again. However, the cause has not been addressed, the destruction experienced in relationships is real, and the memory of the experience hovers like an ever present phantom over our lives waiting to re-appear. And it frequently does.
2. Pulling out the plug is more helpful. Here, we have realised the indefinite nature of the problem if nothing more radical is done and we resolve to seek help. This can span all the way from confiding in a loving and trusted friend to religious confession; joining a therapy group or seeking psychological help from the medical profession; reading an appropriate self-help or self-development book; taking up counselling or psychotherapy etc. All these are helpful in that we no longer feel alone with it all and hope seems on the horizon.
3. Turning off the tap is the best bet because this negativity will not be `cured` by an outside force. We alone are able to solve this, possibly with outside help, by getting back to the original belief structures, the original `wrong ideas` and re-setting them. This is turning off the tap - finding the root thoughts that saddle us with negativity and changing them. If the belief structure and thought structure alters, the negative feelings have nothing to hang onto anymore and they fade away quite naturally - the problem evaporates along with the negative thoughts.

So, turning off the tap is the answer, and this is where discipline comes in. The original thought, when found and displaced, has a nasty habit of echoing for a while, and returning to try and turn the tap on again. This is quite normal, simply momentum, and must not be taken as a sign of failure. The returning thought or belief needs to be rigidly refused entry and stoutly resisted for a short time until the new order is firmly established.

That is not to say that this whole process is quick, easy or even possible. Our belief systems are composed of many, many layers which have been put down over a long period of time and often have to be dismantled gently, in a specific order, for it to be done safely and efficiently. Only our own unique growth process can do this – we cannot know how to do it in advance because `we are it` and can only be a willing co-operative partner in our self-unfoldment. What is being said here, though, is that it is more likely to be as quick and successful as possible if we treat the feelings as merely symptoms of the muddled thoughts.

Having turned off the tap, of course, we now have to clear up the mess, assess and repair any damage and work out how to make sure this event does not recur.

This can involve quite basic alterations to our lives, sometimes small (e.g. needing to move the furniture around, changing light shades and curtains, washing the car or turning out the garage) and sometimes it can take us in fundamentally different directions, such as changing jobs, partners, friends or country (I remember once, coming back after spending a week-end with spiritually minded people, finding myself quite unable, physically, to eat meat and had to go vegetarian. This was something I had never considered before and it was a total surprise both to me and my family – it was also a great practical nuisance as my husband flatly refused to follow me in this and so I had to prepare **two** meals each evening!!). But it need not happen swiftly – it can be more of a slow moving earthquake that plays out inexorably

**by our choice because we want it to.**

## NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR LIVES

For those of us on the path of psycho-spiritual development there can be an all pervasive and dangerous belief system that centres round the thought that there is an end point to growth. It can hold us back immensely and remove all joy from life. In essence it states “If you try hard enough you will get to the end point of Enlightenment and God will be pleased with you. You will then be of use to others and feel good about yourself and live happily ever after”. The living happily ever after is “THE END” of the fairy tales we are told when little children and we imprint this idea into the very fabric of our being, that there is an end point which we must strive to reach and, when we reach it, we will be able to relax because we shall from then on be eternally happy and that is all there is to life and that is its purpose.

I do not believe this to be true.

Apart from anything else, it binds us to the treadmill of consumerism and trains us to be addicts for the next fashionable ‘fix’ out of which someone else – also on this treadmill – will make some profit and take home some personal money. This is all considered admirable as ‘it keeps the economy growing’. It also destroys the planet.

Our society in the West, and increasingly worldwide, is thus money oriented and task oriented. We are taught from an early age that we must ‘do something with our lives’ and ‘get somewhere’. This is, again, considered admirable but we are rarely taught to see that the ‘somewhere’ - like tomorrow – never comes. It is forever – like a mirage of water in the desert – only **able** to appear on the horizon.

Our focus is completely horizontal, based on ‘Go and get’, bring it home, ‘Go and get again’ and bring it home, and – like when playing with a yo-yo – we are praised for the length of time we are able to keep this up. Decades ago, retirement was something of a reward for doing this all our lives however many now retire into poverty, their pensions insufficient to keep them out of the food banks whilst increasing numbers of people working a full-time week also cannot manage without the food banks. In fact, it is not so long ago that a food bank was unknown in this country and this proves to me that something is not right here with our system of thought.

It seems that we are using the present merely to reach the future, as a way of life, and it is not working out well. We have totally lost contact with the present.

Covid has brought some of us, having endured lockdowns, back into the present and we have found it to be a rather wonderful country to visit! Maybe more of us now experience the present and relish the time it gives us, the savings it affords us, the creativity it can unleash and the dreams it can allow to come into focus. For some, it has looked like an almost wide scale meditation or a national retreat. If this is so for even a small proportion of us, then we can expect a flurry of new creative endeavours to blossom as we pick up the pieces of lost jobs and enforced solitary confinement and, together with them, a newfound joy in the present. This of course is contagious. Goodwill and good feelings are contagious; job satisfaction is contagious; doing what we want to do spreads around the feeling of hope and gives the example of life ‘worth living’. People who start businesses or projects in these circumstances spread employment for others attracted by this new creative energy which is

minus the drudgery and frantic `got to` and `must` way of life. These new types of employment are a shot in the arm for `happiness here and now` - not in the future – and are truly, delightfully infectious. They show that anything is possible if we really want it and go for it with love of it in our heart. And, having made the choice to do this, it is wonderful then to find that there are many more people like this around with whom we can link because, once we have made the break with the `happy ever after` syndrome, we can see them. Previous to this we could not recognise them and so we had to make the change seemingly `alone`.

The present is less than a second long, now is less than that.

How can we continue to saddle ourselves with 25 years or more of commitments when we are living in the present all that time and it is less than a second long? No wonder we feel out of gear and our systems are crashing around us.

Negative thoughts and feelings equal unhappiness. Negativity is synonymous with unhappiness.

I am all for happiness now – not put off for the future – and this means a constant monitoring of our feelings and thoughts in order to stay in the happiness zone. It means accepting that simple things, so often mostly free, are capable of giving a deep happiness, contentment and peace that money cannot ever buy. It means accepting that we have the **right** to be happy, now, and that we have the **ability** to find out what makes us happy – but most of all, we **can know** when we **are** happy and learn to be so more and more often. It means junking `you **ought** to be happy with what you've got`; `there are lots of people much worse off than you in the world` or `at least you're not in a war zone` and replacing it with `I want to notice when I **am** happy` and find out in that moment what is making me feel happy and see if I can put more of it into my life.

This is living. Accepting that it is **our** job to make ourselves happy – not Time's, not Money's, not anyone else's. Find the `This is making me happy`, `I am happy when I am doing this`, `This makes me feel good` moments and **register** them. Find at least one per day, maybe lasting only a few seconds, and treasure it, give thanks for it and **remember** it – put it in a `happiness box` as a present **with love from me to me!** This will start up a connection with happiness, rather than the other way round where we tend to notice the moments when we feel unhappy and thus make an unfortunate connection there.

Our happiness is our business. It is also our responsibility to ourselves and those around us to nurture it, increase its presence in our lives and thereby spread it about a bit by our example. Happiness is not something we `do`, it is something we `are`. That is why it is such a good example to find in others. This shows that happiness is ever available, in the oddest of places sometimes, and that our happiness is therefore no less unique and no less easy to find and become – but it does mean locating it first, inside ourselves, and then fostering it.

We don't **have** to `keep waiting at Heaven's gate` like this, but it will not open **for** us. We must make the choice and put in the effort and **open it ourselves**, or, at the very least, **knock!**

We may have made our bed, but we certainly don't have to lie in it. We can take control. We can re-make it. This is entirely at our command.

**We are in charge of our happiness.**