

Creating and Maintaining a Healthy Living Environment

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Much of what we are surrounded with on a daily basis has a significant effect on the way we feel about ourselves, other people, and overall life itself. We are affected by what we experience at any given moment. In some ways we are similar to computers, in that what ever you type into a computer, you can print out at the end of the day. This is similar to what happens with people because what we are exposed to throughout the day will at some point come out of us (in one form or another). In short, what goes in, goes out! All day long things are being typed into us, and being that we are relatively neutral what ever is typed in, will eventually come out. This article is about learning to type good things in because when you type good things in, good things come out, and vice versa.

An image I often use with clients is that of a thousand gallon acrylic aquarium filled with crystal clear water. At one end of the aquarium is a tube going in, and at the other end is a tube going out. In the beginning the water is clear, just as we are born as “whole” or “good”, but what happens is that throughout the day and throughout one’s life, information comes in that is both positive and negative and the negative things slowly start to darken and dirty up the clear water in the tank. The unfortunate thing is that once the water has started to darken, you no longer notice the new “gunk” as it enters the aquarium and it sets, making the water darker and dirtier. If however, the water is crystal clear and “gunk” comes in, you notice it and it can then make it’s way out pretty quickly because you are AWARE of it.

Another example of how we lose awareness once we are repeatedly exposed to negative things, can be found in our reactions to both food and alcohol. I had a friend in

college who was a wrestler that gave up sugar for three months. He abstained from sugar completely for the three months, and when he finally ate it, he strongly felt the effects of it in his system. Although after about two weeks of eating sugar again he no longer noticed the effects of it. This is the same for alcohol, if you rarely or never drink it you will intensely feel its effects after having perhaps only one drink; however, if you consume alcohol regularly it may take more and more for your body to feel effected by it.

The large point here is that we start of whole and pure like that thousand-gallon tank with crystal clear water that I spoke of earlier. When we are repeatedly exposed to negative images, words, actions, etcetera we are negatively affected by them. In this article I will discuss some of the main factors that type into our systems all day long and darken up our crystal clear water, affecting our ability to be whole and pure.

External World Inputs

Companies spend billions of dollars (or Euros, depending on where you are listening from) on advertising in television, radio, newspapers, books, magazines, and the Internet. And the reason why they spend so much money on this is because it works! The ads, and images affect us! Previous studies have been done in movie theatres where quick flashes of “buy popcorn” and “buy candy” would appear during the movie. Although the images flashed too quickly for the people in the audience to actually notice them, they were still affected by their presence as there was a significant increase in purchases after the images had been shown, every time. When people learned of this study, they were quite upset and felt it was an “outrage”! So if quick flashes of images can be so powerful, how do words and images we hear all day long affect us? What is being typed into us

from the constant influx of information that we are getting all day long from the television, radio, books, magazines, newspapers, and Internet?

Have you ever wondered why we are such a materialistic world? The answer can be found in the amount of time that we spend watching and listening to media and advertising. We are being brain washed. Even most children believe that wealth and material things will make them happy because they are repeatedly sent this message on a daily basis. It is sad to see that even a child will feel that they are “less than” or cannot be happy with out the latest material possessions. Although we’ve heard time and time again “money can’t buy happiness”, people still seem to chase after it in hopes that it will make them “happy” and take all their problems away.

Studies examining the relationship between money and happiness have shown that not having enough money matters and does affect our happiness if you are going hungry and do not have a way to feed your children or to provide shelter. Having a bit more money at this severe poverty level does make people happier, but beyond this there is no correlation between money and happiness. You may also be interested to look into studies that have shown families and individuals who have won the lottery. Although we may imagine this “takes away all our problems”, the majority of these individuals and families end up with the same financial problems they use to have and find themselves unhappy after the general euphoria of winning and spending the money has worn off.

Television

So now you may be asking yourself: What can I do differently? The answer is simple: Don’t watch the ads! After all, this is what TIVO was invented for. Fast forward to your program so that you are not being brainwashed by the companies. Companies

may not like me saying this, but this is what you need to do. Another example of how powerful ads are can be seen in regards to children. Children always want the latest and greatest toys because of what they see and hear on television. What ever they want at Christmas is whatever the ads are saying they want. Children are not as sophisticated as us, but they work just like us! The reason why they want the popular toy of the year is not because it is a great toy, but because they watched the toys being advertised on television.

But advertisements are only part of the “gunk” that enters our system! It would behoove you to pay attention to the programs and movies you are watching as well. Television and movies show us how to treat others. When you watch violence all day long, you are going to think that violence is pretty normal. To stress the negative impact violent media has on children, studies have shown that they are much more likely to be aggressive towards toys they are playing with when exposed to violent programs, even in the presence of their parents. It is important to note however that children are not the only one’s negatively influenced by media. I often find that I have to educate the men I work with about female sexuality because what they have learned from television and movies, written by men, is so skewed from what women really want and feel. Women are typically not going to be intimate unless they feel emotionally connected with the person, feel close with them and have had a good day and everything is going well. Of course there are always exceptions such as at bars and one-night stands, but mostly this is what women need before being intimate. Many men cannot understand why their wife will not have sex with them after they have yelled at them or treated them poorly. It takes a lot of re-educating to undo what the media has falsely represented as women’s sexuality.

Now there is good television, just as there are good books, and magazines but you really need to be picky! What ever you expose yourself to can and will affect you. So you cannot simply say that you will leave the television or radio on and it won't have any affect on you, because the truth is, it will! It is important to be attentive to what your conscious and unconscious mind is hearing and seeing. For, if you are not attentive to this, you basically are becoming a puppet that is being manipulated by what you are being exposed to.

If you still find yourself questioning the impact that these words and images can have, think of how powerful words can be even while we sleep. The self-help industry has made a great deal of money from tapes and CD's that the listener plays while they sleep to change habits, increase self-esteem, decrease depression, etc. If this much can be done while we are in a sleeping and unconscious state, what power do images and words have that we receive while awake, both on a conscious and unconscious level?

People may argue that they are not affected by these negative images and words, and that they can watch a scary or violent movie and not be affected by it. This takes me back to my example of the aquarium I mentioned earlier. Internally they have become numb to the violence and negativity, just as the tank can become filled with so much dark and muddy water that that the new "gunk" entering the system is not even noticed. If you were not use to this, just as if the aquarium were clean and clear, you would be affected by it.

Music and Radio

In regards to music, you really want to pay attention to what you are listening to! One recommendation that I typically make is not to leave on background music unless

you know what the words are. While I'm at the gym for example, I always bring my own music and headphones so that I can have control over what music, or input, I am listening to. This is not to say that one type of music is better than another, because I feel that in any form of music there are good words, but I will say that it is important to know what the words are that you are listening to. When you buy the album read what they are saying, especially if you don't really know what is being said because all day long what you listen to will affect you. Instrumental is always good music because there are no bad words in it.

If you listen to the radio also pay attention to what you are listening to in between songs because ads are not limited to commercials on Television. How often have you driven to work only to realize that you do not remember the journey? Perhaps you were in the zone. But can you remember what you were listening to while you were in that zone? How many ads played while you were driving? Pay attention to this because unless you are playing a CD or music from your I-pod, chances are you've been listening to ads that can and will affect you.

A great example of how words can impact us even at the unconscious level can be seen through hypnosis. With my training and experience in using hypnosis I have been able to change a person's habits (even smoking and other addictions) simply through hypnotic state. My point here is to validate the significance and importance of words and music. If hypnosis has such a powerful effect over people's lives, what power do words and music have over us? Many times after a hypnosis session has ended, the client does not even remember what happened, which is similar to our memory of all the input we

receive on a daily basis. The common thread here is that we are greatly affected and influenced by both.

Who you spend time with

The people we spend time with also greatly affect and influence us. Have you ever noticed that you may be having a wonderful day and are very happy but when someone who is negative or in a bad mood is around you, they have the ability to bring you down? Now this is extremely magnified when that negative person is someone close to you or you know personally. The opposite is also true however, in that you can be having a pretty awful day and if someone is very kind with you and treats you in a positive way, this can alter your mood so that you now find yourself feeling somewhat if not significantly better. The moral of the story here is to choose positive and loving people to be in your life.

When we have suffered from negative and abusive relationships, be it with family, friends, work, etcetera we start to begin to expect this and tolerate this from everyone around us, even new relationships that we enter. Many clients that I work with have been treated poorly by family members and in relationships and often tolerate cruel, unkind and disrespectful behavior because in some ways they don't know any better. It is unfortunate if this is the first and only place you have heard this, but if so let me be the first to tell you that negative, unkind, disrespectful behavior is not okay- from anyone! Now people can become upset and can engage in negative behavior even if this is not how they "typically" behave. But if someone who cares about you has treated you this way, it is important that they recognize this, are truly remorseful and take steps not to do this to you again. The problem is that sometimes people hurt others repeatedly, only to

apologize and promise to change, which they do but often only for a short time. This is often the cycle of domestic violence or abuse that so many individuals find themselves in. But this doesn't only apply for domestic violence, in fact domestic violence is a very extreme version of what I am talking about here.

This is about your everyday relationships with friends, coworkers, family members, spouses, children, and even new acquaintances. Some people move through this world with negative views about everything, constantly complaining, putting others down, even cursing at people as they drive. In many ways these individuals pinpoint everything that is wrong with the world around them, but have a great deal of difficulty taking a good look at what lies with-in them. These individuals have the power to influence us in very negative ways, whether it is to second guess ourselves, internalizing their voice only to continue putting ourselves down long after they have left; or to make poor choices for ourselves in regards to health, emotional well being or relationships.

You may find yourself wondering how you can change this if most of the people in your life are like this, or if even you yourself have become like this. It is sad to say, but sometimes when we are around such negativity and toxicity we can take it on as our own and think and behave in just the same ways. There are however, ways to create change. The first step is to not spend time with negative people. This may be difficult especially if you are surrounded with people like this, but it can be done! I worked with a teenager once and although he was a great individual, he struggled because most of the people he spent time with were very negative. Our first task was to find healthy activities he enjoyed such as hiking and being outdoors, and he continued to put forth the effort to do these things. The more he did the things he enjoyed, the better he felt and the more

individuals he met that were like him and whom he could share his passions with.

Although it is hard to find positive healthy people, if you continually put forth the effort you will find one. If 1 out of 100 people are positive, then you need to find that 1 positive person and hang on to them. It will be hard, but you need to just keep looking and when you find that person make sure you spend time with them. The bottom line is that it is work to find such people but the pay off is immeasurable.

Another important note to make here is that we can have an influence on the people around us as well. When you change others around you will change too, even if it is in a manner that you might not be hoping for. For example if you are in the presence of people that are gossiping or speaking negatively about another person or thing, you can change the direction of the conversation by making a positive remark instead of a put down. What I am basically talking about here is redirecting conversations, and changing the subject because even though they may not be directing their negativity towards you, they are being negative to others and you don't need to hear that! Some may find it difficult to take such initiative and change the direction of the conversation, so if you find yourself in this position, the best thing you can do is just walk away. The main point that I am trying to stress here is to only participate in conversations that are good, and people will realize that if they want to spend time with you they can't continue to be so negative. I remember a weekend trip I once took to the mountains. I rode on a bus with many other individuals, and at one point they began to talk about something very negative. At that point I began to read a book, because I was on a bus and did not have the option to get up and leave. However, when one of the women asked me what I thought about what they were discussing, I told her that I was not listening because I wasn't interested in the topic.

Although this may have seemed a bit rude, the point is that you don't have to participate with such negativity.

Teasing is another area that is important to address as it often occurs between couples, families, friends, etc. Teasing is harmful because it often has underlying criticism to it. Maybe you think you can't have fun without teasing, but teasing can really hurt a relationship. There is nothing healthy about it! No matter how tough or strong a person's exterior is, we all care and we are all sensitive to the damage that teasing causes. Setting limits to teasing, negative behavior and comments from others is directly related to boundaries, which is a crucial element to living a healthy and happy life.

You may find yourself struggling with these difficulties at work as well, and if you can't seem to escape or change the negativity I highly recommend changing your job, starting your own business or working for yourself, because being happy is way better for you than having a job that makes you miserable. The same also applies for your spouse or partner. If you leave every time they are negative they will soon learn that if they want to be around you they have to stop being negative. Some women that I work with are married to very negative men, and I have them carry money with them so if their husbands are really nasty with them, they get out of the car and call a cab. They can take the cab home or to a friend's house, but ultimately what is being done here is these women are setting boundaries, and negative people need to learn more boundaries. This may sound harsh, but negative behavior and its effects can be abusive and long lasting, so it is important to set such boundaries and limitations. The great thing about all this however, is that when you change others around you will change as well. As mentioned

earlier this change may not be the change you were hoping for, but the changes they create may make it more clear to you about choices you need to make in order to lead a more healthy and happy life. In short, this may mean spending less and less time with certain people and perhaps even ending unhealthy relationships.

If you are single make sure you choose a person that is positive and loving, and if you are in a relationship that is dysfunctional, if you really work towards changing yourself, they too will change even if it is in a manner that you did not expect or desire. Their change may be that they too want to decrease the negative aspects of their life desiring a more healthy and positive lifestyle. However, it is possible that they may find these new changes you have created “boring” and ultimately may not want to spend as much time with you. Your significant other may start spending more time with people or friends that have a negative influence on them or they may engage in more unhealthy and negative behaviors. Watching sunsets, smelling flowers, and listening to beautiful and relaxing music may turn your partner away. You, of course, can follow him or her, but there will be consequences. If you follow your inner most heart, one of love and beauty, what you get may not be what you expected, but it will be beautiful. Only faith and commitment to a life of peace and joy will create this. Like a butterfly, you will be transformed into something beautiful.

In many ways, everything will change. Only those who choose to be transformed into the butterfly will remain your close soul mates. You can still visit the other caterpillars, and even spend some time with them, but the majesty of the sky and the other butterflies will be calling you back to join them.

The ultimate goal is to be completely set on this path one hundred percent because unless you fully strive to change your life towards a more healthy and positive direction, it can be easy to be pulled back to where you started from. You may forget the beauty of the clear water and the feeling of flying in the endless sky. This takes dedication and work because even the smallest change can be difficult. But I promise you that the payoff is well worth it! So when looking for your life partner, make sure he or she wants to fly in the sky with you. If not, my heart cries out to you, please join in the wonders of the sky and all will ultimately be well. Life may not give you what you want, but if you pursue peace and happiness at all costs, you will be richly rewarded.

Internal World Inputs

The largest internal input is yourself! What I am talking about here is that self-talk and self-dialogue about other people and yourself. Unless you have mastered the previous article and podcast “Living a Peaceful Life” and learned to still your mind, you are going to be thinking all day long, and what you think matters- period.

Conditioning

One of the reasons why people think and behave in the ways they do, comes from conditioning. Conditioning derives from all the input they have had their whole life. Men and women are both conditioned by our culture to be unhealthy and dysfunctional in many ways. Women have primarily one thing that living on our planet causes them dysfunction, while men have four main things that cause them to struggle emotionally and psychologically. With the boundary line becoming more blurred between men and women, women are starting to have some of the struggles that mainly only men have

historically experienced. Due to the fact that women have become more incorporated into modern culture, their exposure to unhealthy behaviors deemed as “healthy” by our society has increased dramatically. This is why it is important to pay attention to what we are exposed to because there are direct consequences to such exposure.

Women are repeatedly told through the television, advertisements, radio, movies, magazines, Internet, peers, etcetera that they need to be concerned about their looks and that they always have to “look good”. Obviously this creates incredible insecurities in women because they cannot “always” look good. Human beings age, this is just a natural process of life. But there is great pressure placed upon women to “look young” and have less wrinkles and sagging, making the companies that specialize in anti-age remedies and plastic surgery billions of dollars every year. This pressure to look young and “look good” all the time is actually very dysfunctional, one only needs to open up a magazine to see how women starve themselves, use drugs and diet pills, and go under the knife just to meet this expectation. The truth is, being healthy means accepting who you are no matter what you look like. No one can live up to the constant pressure because no matter how beautiful, thin, or young looking you are it will never be enough. Studies have shown that even models often struggle with thoughts that they are “average” or even “less than average” because they may perseverate over very small and seemingly insignificant characteristics that they find unattractive about themselves. Suffering occurs whenever you have the conditioning that to be acceptable you have to look good.

Through society and culture, men are typically told that “big boys don’t cry” and are encouraged to suppress their feelings. They primarily get this message from their peers, media, and sports. Men are encouraged to be workaholics, and are told that they have to

do this in order to be a “successful human being”. If men are not workaholics they are often called losers. Men are encouraged to be sexaholics and to have many different sex partners. They are also encouraged to cheat on their partners and to continue with this behavior even after they are married through extra marital affairs. The last main dysfunctional behavior that men are encouraged to behave in is drinking alcohol. There is a great deal of pressure for men to drink at sporting and social events, and even when just spending time with friends. In fact “guys night out” typically involves getting drunk for most men.

Exposure to these things through culture has conditioned us to believe that they are “healthy” behaviors, but the reality is that they have caused us great struggle and suffering. Awareness can help counter that, because once you are aware of something, change can occur. Awareness is really the most powerful transformational force in the Universe because ignorance and lack of awareness causes suffering. In pure awareness, you really won’t want to hurt another person, because the Golden Rule is forever in your heart. You care about the feelings of others, because you are so present with yours. All the addictions in the world, from drugs to food, have really one purpose: not to be present with or aware of what is. Awareness will transform you and keep you present. Learn, deeply learn, about Awareness—it is the key to life.

It is important to note that society has improved somewhat in that the last generation or two is better about letting little boys cry, but this bias still exists to some extent. You don’t see too many action heroes talking about their feelings or crying if their feelings are hurt. As mentioned earlier, with their increased presence throughout the work force over

the last several generations, women have been pressured to adopt some of the issues that men struggle with such as work-a-holism, alcoholism, and suppressing emotions.

So when you ask “Whose fault is it that they are the way they are?” The answer is that it is the conditionings fault. You then realize that at the core, they are human beings who have been conditioned to be the way that they are. If you were exactly in their same shoes, home, and life and had exactly the same things happened to you, you would be acting just like them. This change in thought helps you to lose that anger of “Why aren’t they different? What’s wrong with them?” It’s not that they can’t change, but they need new conditioning to do so, and until they have that new conditioning, they will continue to think and behave in the same ways. Right now I am reconditioning you. I am teaching you to stop giving so much credit to peoples actions and see how they, like you, are really a product of their environment and genetics. This awareness will soften your hurt towards everyone, even yourself. “Bad behavior/choices” are really just conditioned and genetic choices. You cannot choose your genetics and much of your conditioning has occurred without your choice as well, so stop judging and just flow with life. Learning just to be and having positive, healthy water flow in your tank will recondition you into something beautiful. Be that.

The Native Americans have a very powerful and wise saying: “Until you’ve walked in a persons moccasins for several miles, don’t judge their behavior”. So the message is: Don’t be judging, period! It doesn’t do you any good! If you ultimately start looking at everyone as someone that you love and who is beautiful, you are going to start feeling a lot better. Really work on seeing the positive things, even within yourself, because what we do all day long- way more than what we do with other people- is judge

ourselves. And although it may be difficult to see, most of the time when we are judging others we are judging something we don't like about ourselves. A point to keep in mind and be aware of is when we point our finger at someone else, we have 3 fingers pointing back at us!

Everything you say about yourself matters

Many people think that it is no big deal to judge themselves, but the truth is that is a very big deal indeed! Years ago I worked with a woman who's husband had made a negative comment about her intelligence years earlier that stuck in her brain. She was mad at him for years and really had a difficult time getting over it, even though he had apologized. After I began working with her, we started to uncover that all day long while she worked she would be critical about her self and repeatedly called herself "dumb". I asked her : "How come it wasn't okay for him say something mean to you, but you say it to yourself all day long? It is no better- and you need to stop doing that." She strongly felt that because she was saying it, it didn't matter, but this was actually one of the things that was keeping her from getting well. The truth is, when you say negative things to yourself it matters just as much as someone else saying it to you. The best way to judge this self-talk is to ask yourself "How would I feel if someone else said this to me?" And if you don't want someone else to say it to you, don't say it to yourself!

I often work with my clients on helping them to increase their awareness, because if they are not aware, they cannot change their behavior. Awareness in itself changes things a great deal. If you aren't aware that every time you see a certain ethnicity you are filled with hatred and malice, or every time you look in the mirror you say hateful things to yourself about a certain part of your physique, educational level, etcetera, you can't

change it. So you first have to ask yourself: “what am I doing?” Keep in mind that you may not like what you see when you start to become aware of your actions and thoughts. After there is an increased awareness, you are able to witness it, and the next step is to shift your focus to something else because dwelling on negative things will get you no where, unless your goal is to feel miserable about yourself and life. Do not create a story and thus reinforce your negative thoughts and do not try to suppress them, as this gives them power. Instead, witness them and then get back to the now. Just be and flow with life, with very little mental commentary (please listen to or read “*Living a Peaceful Life*” to learn more about this).

It is always easier to point out problems in other people because taking a good look at yourself (having awareness) is difficult to do. Once you decrease the negative self-talk, you will be surprised how your judgments about others will decrease as well. You may now be thinking: “But what if what I am saying is the truth?” While the comment you are thinking or saying may be true, is this something you would want to be told? Do you want to focus on the negative? Unless you are totally callous, making unkind remarks to and about others only hurts them and you. And living a callous life is not a happy life! Some people have to drink an astronomical amount, or take drugs, or use some other negative coping skill to cope with how they treat others, and ultimately what they think of and how they treat themselves. If you really try to see the actions and behaviors of others as their conditioning, then you may be able to stop judging them as much. Because just as you were condition to be the way you are, they too were condition to be the way they are. The truth is that you aren’t going to feel good if you hurt people. This gets back to my earlier book- *Anger Work: How to Express Your Anger and Still*

be Kind. It's not what happens to us that keeps us from getting well, it's what we do to other people that is the biggest thing in life that prevents us from growing and healing. If you are hurting people, even if it is just in your mind, you are going to start seeing yourself as a cruel and mean person. It's hard to take a good look in the mirror when you are a cruel and unkind person because you can do anger work when other people have hurt you, but you can't do anger work when you've hurt other people. When you hurt others, you just have to forgive yourself, and forgiving ourselves is probably one of the most difficult things to do.

I remember watching an episode of Gilligan's Island when Gilligan found berries that allowed him to read other people's minds. Gilligan shared the berries with his friends on the island, and not too long after this everyone started hating each other because they could hear the negative things they were thinking about each other. Gilligan burnt all the berries and everyone got mad at him and questioned why he had done this. He said "but look at how much damage it was causing!" The moral of this story is that sharing all your negative thoughts with people causes them damage, and even when you are with someone and thinking really harmful things with out telling them, that hurts you because then you are going to see yourself in a negative light, and feel negative as well. One of the most important things to remember is that when you judge someone else, internally you are also judging yourself.

But the reverse of this behavior is also true. When you focus on the beautiful and wonderful traits of others, and even start the habit of sharing these gems with them, your world will change. People around you will feel your love and warmth and benefit from it. You will feel more loving. And perhaps, slowly but surely, you will start to fall in

love with yourself. Kindness, gentleness, warmth, and love are the gems of life. Share them with others and yourself, and see how “the world” begins to change.

Change

As mentioned earlier change is hard because conditioning causes us to be the way we are. Getting back to my computer image: all day long things are being typed into you- but if you start being aware of that and start changing them your life will change. This means being aware of the music you listen to, TV shows and movies you watch, and the people you spend time with. This also means being aware of what goes on in your head and shifting your focus when you begin to judge other people and especially yourself. What this article is doing is reconditioning you to act differently. Now that we have made you aware of this, you can start working towards creating change in your life. It is still conditioning, but now it’s conditioning that is going to make your life happy and successful.

When I was at Princeton I use to go to inner city Brooklyn to work with Junior High aged children every weekend for 1 year. After getting to know them, I learned that each of them had been mugged at least two times in their life. They all came from a very poor part of Brooklyn and each of them had an extremely tough background. One day I took about 10 of them to Princeton for the day. For those of you who have not visited Princeton, it has beautiful rolling hills with wide-open spaces, and is very pristine. I remember walking through one of these gorgeous grass lawns and the children were just dropping their garbage on the ground as they walked because that was what they were use to. The most interesting thing for me was that although this was a very pristine and idyllic place, they were very uncomfortable there because they were not use to that

cleanliness, open space and tranquility. On the contrary, they were use to the crime, dirt, and noise of the inner city. What I am speaking of in this example is conditioning. These children were conditioned to behave in such a way because of the experiences they had everyday living in a poor, violent, and unsafe neighborhood.

If you are use to having negative words and images bombarding you on a daily basis, and you start listening to the birds, or start watching sunsets and listening to tranquil music, you are actually going to have a very hard time with that at first because you aren't use to it. So be aware of that. You may listen to this and start to make some of these changes, but may find yourself wanting some of that "junk" back in you because you aren't use to cleanliness of the mind. It is important to mention here that knowledge is not enough! You may listen to or read this article 10 times and really understand it, but unless you practice it, it is irrelevant. My field is a great example of this. Lots of Therapist's, Psychologist's, and Psychiatrists are trained on how to avoid and treat dysfunction and may receive training on how to be healthy. But the truth is that there are many people in my field that actually struggle with mental health issues and are not very healthy at all. It may be a surprise to hear this, but the fact of the matter is that you can have all the knowledge in the world about how to be healthy but be extremely unhealthy because you haven't applied that knowledge.

As a Psychologist I have to get continuing education to maintain my license, so I try to choose ones that are interesting to me. I love meditation, and have meditated for decades. I once went to a seminar on meditation in which a very prestigious Professor gave this talk about all the benefits of it. There were about twenty Psychologist's there, and they all appeared equally excited to learn more about the practice of meditation. The

Professor asked how many people in the room meditated everyday, knowing there were so many benefits to it. Only one hand went up: mine. Now this is not to brag, but my point is that if you listen and don't apply what you learn into practice, it does you no good. People asked me how I made time for it, and my question in return was "With something this important, how do you not make time for it?" The point of this example is that if you listen to this article but don't apply it, it won't do you any good. The trick is, you have to start applying it! You have to turn that TV off sometimes and listen to classical music instead of the negative music and you may have to start looking for new friends if the people you typically spend time with are negative. This is hard, but the benefits are worth it.

One thing you may often hear and something I strongly feel you need to run a long way away from is: "In an ideal world..." You may hear this from Preachers, talk shows, and even Psychologist's. However, this it is just not true, because there are people out there that can and are living this way. If you want names of some of these people, please feel free to e-mail me so that you can learn more about them. If there is 1 person out of 6 billion people that is able to do this, then it is possible that you can do this too. That is science! One of the laws of science states that if there is one exception to something, that means it is possible. Your age indicates the number of years that you have been conditioned, so it may take 15 to 20 years to totally recondition yourself, but it is worth that effort. If you need help, go to a therapist that is practicing this him or herself and work with him/ her until you get it and are able to live in this way.

How do you change your thoughts?

The first step in changing your thoughts is to witness what you are thinking. You may be thinking to yourself “that person is fat”, and while you can’t suppress this thought, you merely witness it with “oh, there is that thought!”, and shift your focus to something else. Don’t judge or be harsh to yourself about these thoughts, simply observe and witness them. In many ways this is somewhat parallel to what I stated earlier about walking away from a situation in which people are speaking negatively about others. You don’t criticize them, you merely notice their behavior and walk away. The same can be done with your thoughts, don’t criticize them- just notice them and focus on something else. In life there is always something beautiful to participate in or look at. If the thought you are having is similar to what was mentioned above, about someone’s weight, focus on their hair, teeth, clothes or personality instead. With time you will change and hopefully that attitude in you will change as well.

Refocusing your thoughts can be broken down into 4 parts. First, thoughts arise spontaneously in your mind. It is important to note that these thoughts are not good or bad, they just are, and at this point you have three options for these thoughts. One option is to continue following the thoughts, filling up the next 5 minutes to 5 hours with worries, fears, and desires. This is what most people have done throughout their lives, and in some senses have become like puppets to their thoughts because they are so tied and connected to them. A second option is to suppress the thoughts. The problem here is that the very act of suppressing them, gives them power. A great example of this can be seen in lust. When you lust after something, be it food, another person, goals, etcetera and you try to repress it, the desire to consume, be with, obtain and grasp are intensified

immensely. So if following or suppressing the thoughts only lead to more pain and suffering, what is the alternative and more beneficial option? The answer is simple. Witness and acknowledge the thoughts as they arise, and then refocus your senses to what is going on in the present moment. Pay attention to your surroundings and you will surely find that there is something beautiful to look at or listen to, be it a bird singing, a beautiful song on the radio, good company, or a beautiful flower blooming in the garden. Try to look at the world through child like eyes, filled with wonder, and there will always be something new to look at. Trying to still your mind is another way to refocus and instill a sense of calmness and well being within you. Focus and follow your breath and you may find the peace inside of you that passes all understanding.

Genetics

So maybe now you are asking yourself: “What if I am genetically predisposed to being negative?” While it is true that we have genetic predispositions, anything can be treated and more importantly anything can be treated well. For example, I have treated several people that were on the edge of becoming Schizophrenic and were presenting with early signs of Schizophrenia such as auditory and visual hallucinations. Most of them were teenagers as this is typically the age of onset for the disorder. I was able to successfully help these individuals by changing their thoughts and decreasing their stress. Although they may have had genetic predispositions they did not become schizophrenic, and are not taking medication either. It took a great deal of work, but imagine the pay off for these individuals as they did not end up with a life crippled by hallucinations, and voices or tied to medication for the rest of their lives. Everyone is predisposed to

something, but if you take care of yourself that genetic predisposition that is negative won't begin. It takes stress for it to kick it in and by reducing the stress you get better.

In conclusion, work towards not judging, just witness what you are thinking and be in the eternal now. The ultimate goal you are working for is that silent being in the now and the peace you will have all the time when you are silent and still. Even though this article is about having good and clear things come in to your mind, ultimately what you are working towards is having a thoughtless and peaceful mind all of the time. This meditative state is where you are just being, and not always having that dialogue of "is this good or bad" going on, because it just "is". It is possible for you to achieve this state, but you must work at it. It takes work, but the pay off is worth your investment. I wish you infinite blessings in your journey to creating a healthy living environment and in turn bringing a greater sense of peace and joy to your life.

This podcast was read by Doug Barron.

Final note from Dr. Robert Puff and Elizabeth Lozano, M.A.: We want thank you for reading our article. Our goal in creating this writing is to help improve the overall state of your life and encourage you to live at your highest human potential. We will continue to work together to produce more articles and podcasts in order to help you improve in various areas of your life. If you haven't had a chance, please listen to and/or read our previous pieces and come back again to see what's new. Everything that we create is free worldwide, so if you like what we are saying, tell someone to visit our website www.DoctorPuff.com and download our material. Because we are working together on these new materials, you may see a more rapid production of material. The two of us

wish you a blessed life, filled with much peace and joy. Dr. Robert Puff and Elizabeth
Lozano, M.A.