

I'M NOT HAPPY - What's Wrong With Me?

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There is nothing 'wrong' with you - you are simply more aware of the insecure nature of the ego than you would like to be. As uncomfortable as that may be, being aware of the insecurity of your ego is your greatest asset. Without it, you would be identified with your ego. You would by default *be* your ego, because there would be no other sense of self informing you that you are something different.

Your unhappiness is letting you know that you are *not* your ego, that you have other options. There is a voice inside you, calling from a place beyond the busy traffic of everyday life. A voice that, amidst all the din and clamour of the world, is trying to be heard. But rarely is, because of the pursuits and distractions of your everyday self. How *can* it be heard, when it is drowned out by constant mind chatter as well?

There is another side to life. A side of the street you have perhaps glimpsed at times or found yourself walking along, without knowing how you got there. But that didn't matter, because you felt happy. No matter how brief that was or what your circumstances were at the time, life was good. It was as if something had clicked into place in the universe and everything was right. And you were not about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

Now things have changed. What once may have seemed to be the work of Providence or fortune, something over which you had no control, is now an opportunity to find out how things in fact work. To take a closer look at the way in which things come to be. And to realize that your influence on events is much greater than you think.

You may never have received a 'User's Manual for Life', but that shouldn't stop you from writing your own. Knowing that you are the author of your own happiness is the chapter you want to make sure you get right.

If you listen carefully to that voice inside you, it will tell you what you need in order to be happy, to live on the other side of the street. And it will also tell you that you can cross the street any time you like.

But don't look to your ego for answers. That's like asking a blind man to help you cross a busy intersection.

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"So who do I ask, if I am not to trust my ego?" Let your own unhappiness be your guide. "What? How can I place my happiness in the hands of someone, or something, that is the exact opposite of what I want?" That's the beauty of it. Who knows better where to find food than someone who is hungry? Who can better advise you what is required to make you happy, than the embodiment of all that is *missing* from your current situation?

"But won't I feel even more unhappy if I have to face up to all of that? I'm unhappy enough as it is!" Living in denial of the things you most want out of life is what is causing you to be unhappy. When you turn a blind eye to your feelings, a deaf ear to your heart or a mute tongue to your deepest longings, you have in effect *become*... your ego. You will not only feel unhappy, you will *be* unhappy. And that's a lot worse than trying to rid yourself of negative feelings, no matter how persistent these may have become.

When you allow your ego to get the better of you, you've only got one thing left. And that's *the best* of you. That's the part of you that still remembers what it feels like to be happy, if only for a moment. The part of you that is still capable of having hope, in spite of all reason not to or all evidence to the contrary. The part that still believes... in the power of good.

When you become your ego, you give away the best of yourself. The world becomes a very dark place, filled with fear, uncertainty and doubt. Like Adam and Eve who once knew better times, things are not going very well here on Earth. Logic and reason may be your only allies now, but it is the voice of fear you are listening to. And that's what got you into trouble in the first place.

Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt (FUD) are the tools of the trade of the ego. Like disinformation and other forms of scaremongering, FUD is a tactic widely used in marketing and politics and is a manifestation of the so-called 'Appeal to Fear'. This is a form of fallacy in which support for an idea is created by using deception and propaganda to increase fear and prejudice towards an opponent. A master of concealment and disguise, the ego has no scruples about pulling the wool over your eyes in order to get what it wants.

If you are in the dark about what you truly want in life, then the ego has free reign. And invariably you lose sight of your own true nature. Those desires that define you and drive you at the core of your being become surrounded by a murky haze. The light that radiates from deep within does not penetrate this obscuration, but instead casts long shadows in the psyche. And because it is the nature of the psyche to project its contents onto the external world, life becomes in many respects a kind of shadow play. Or as Plato described it in his Allegory of the Cave, a life lived in darkness, mistakenly interpreting the shadows thrown upon the wall of a cave as reality. (In like manner, Plato's Metaphor of the Sun still holds up as a useful way of describing the nature of ultimate reality.)

"Let me get this straight. Are you saying that unhappiness is a good thing? That it is not something I should try to get rid of?" There is nothing good or bad, right or wrong, about either happiness or unhappiness. That the first feels better is of course a given. These are simply states of being that provide you with feedback about how things are working out for you. Whether your life is on track or if you somewhere took a turn that is not to your liking. If you have fallen off your path, if you are on the wrong path or on no path at all, then you will be provided with more than enough reasons to make changes. This is what can be referred to as 'unhappiness'. The evidence is stacking up against you that life is not working out the way you want it to.

Your feelings let you know what makes you happy and what makes you unhappy. They are part of your internal guidance system, a built-in set of checks and balances that provides for continuous monitoring and corrections. Feelings supply real-time data about your current reality. If you are experiencing unhappiness, you are being given valuable information about what is *missing* from your experience. And, by inference, what it is that you require in order to be happy. Unhappiness may not be a pleasurable experience, but don't shoot the messenger!

And do watch out for the ploys and ruses, the trickery and deceit, of the ego. What you want is *trustworthy* information - not disinformation, an attack of FUD or rationalizations about what you are feeling. To deny your own feelings, to call them by another name or to push them down below the level of awareness will make your unhappiness even worse. Repression, like all cyclical laws of nature, leads to depression. And the way out of depression is *expression*.

Owning up to your feelings, going into dialogue with them and finding out what changes you may need to make in your life, puts you back in the driver's seat - and your ego in the backseat. (And as you know, don't listen to backseat drivers.) You become free to not only determine your own destination in life, but also the best way to get there. And the number of stops you make along the way is entirely up to you. (Because as you also know, it's about... *the journey*.)

"So where do I go from here? What's the best way of finding out what I want - what I really want, and not just what I don't want?" Start by getting clear about what you need in order to be happy. Truly happy, not just content or satisfied. That data is already available to you. (At least, if you are in touch with your feelings. If not, allow yourself the opportunity to do so.) Clarifying goals that are less obvious or less superficial involves some soul searching, a process of self-inquiry and decision-making over a period of time. And when the time is right, action-taking. (If you're going to cross the street, it's safer to wait until the light is green.)

As discussed in the article "GOAL SETTING - Get It Right This Time!", allowing the needs of our ego to dictate important choices in life is a sure-fire way of causing unhappiness and a great deal of discontent. Not only in ourselves but in our relationships and other areas of our lives as well. And in doing so we measure up short of our potential as human beings. Happiness may be our birthright, but like good health it is something that should not be taken for granted.

The market is flooded with books and DVD's, courses and on-line trainings providing instruction in identifying and achieving goals that are important to a person. But if your goals are not in alignment with - or better yet, originating from - your life purpose, core values and deepest personal truths, you are most likely setting yourself up for disappointment. Even if you become wildly successful in certain areas of your life, you might be woefully failing in others.

Central to our happiness and well-being - and a prerequisite for experiencing these states rather than just pursuing them - is having goals that serve our *evolutionary needs* as human beings. Needs such as meaning, purpose and fulfillment. Fundamental drives which at the same time become our guiding principles for a life that is well lived.

And this comes from a life that is well served. When our deepest needs involve being of service in some way or another, making a difference not only in our own lives but in the lives of others, we stand the greatest chance of becoming successful as human beings.

We become happy because, at the heart of being human, we find something not 'wrong' with ourselves, but rather something that is *very right*: our own connection to Source. And the more we learn about how things work, the play of light and shadow both in ourselves and the world around us, we come to an amazing discovery. It turns out that our ego was not standing in the way of our happiness - it was pointing out the way to happiness! What we previously perceived as an obstacle in our path was, in truth, our own inner wisdom showing us the way. It was not a source of malevolence but instead a benevolent being in the service of our Source.

"But how can that be? How can something that is by its very nature 'insecure', as you admitted earlier, suddenly turn out to be our friend?" It depends on our perspective. If our back is to the fire as with the prisoners in Plato's cave, we may ascribe any number of interpretations onto the shapes that loom up before us on the wall of the cave. But these are only shadows, projections of things passing in front of the fire behind us. These things are the dark, indistinct contents of our own psyche. They are our preconceptions, our presumptions and prejudices. And most sinisterly, our prejudgements. (See the article "TO JUDGE IS TO BE JUDGED", concerning the harmful effects of judgementalism.)

"But how did we get here in the first place? What power passed judgement upon us, that turned us into prisoners?" Blaming God or some other higher power for our own indiscretions or bad choices, our own lack of foresight or insight, is certainly not going to get us out of here. We are here for a reason. And that is not to remorse about our past or to speculate about things over which we have no control. Nor to hypnotize ourselves with phantasmagoria. If we are to plot the perfect getaway, we must stop staring at these projections on the cave wall and ask ourselves: "Where are these *coming from*?" Eventually, we will discover their source. And with that, we gain our freedom.

Opening up to our own inner light gives us a whole new perspective on things. It throws a new light on age-old questions such as the 'battle' between good and evil, the 'split' between a higher self and a lower self, the 'divorce due to irreconcilable differences' between a life of the spirit and the way of the world. These things may be perceived as very real and very true when seen in a certain light, but as our eyes adjust to the light at the core of our being, so does our perception of things change. We no longer "see through a glass, darkly"; we see things *as they are* - and they are *all* emanations of light, and not darkness.

It comes down to, ultimately, not another conflict to be settled, but a *choice* to be made: the choice between love and fear. (For a discussion of this, see the article "LOVE AND FEAR - The Only Choice There Is".) It may be argued that, from a unitive perspective ('all is one and one is all'), there is no substantial distinction between the two. However, that does not help us deal with the choices we need to make in everyday life. As human beings trying to navigate our way through often very confusing circumstances, we need not a new religion or a new philosophy but a very practical how-to, can-do way of making the most out of life. We need to become more street-smart, if you like, with our psychological and spiritual perspectives.

"OK, so we're back to the street. If I'm going to get it right, let's take it up a notch then. What can I do that will make me not only street-smart, but... streetwise? What will give me that edge, that will help me to keep my cool no matter what life throws at me?" Life is not a battle to be fought or a game to be won. That is what you might be lead to believe if you browse through the self-help section of any bookstore, but such beliefs are based on false premises. These books may make it to the bestseller list, and their authors a lot of money, but there is no solution for a problem that doesn't exist. There is nothing wrong with you, so there is nothing to fix.

If anything can be learned from all of this, it is that we can save ourselves a lot of unnecessary effort and expense by asking ourselves the right questions. What do we need - *truly* - in order to make ourselves happy? Not what others have told us, or answers that others have found for themselves, but *our own answers*. And these lie within, just below the surface of our conscious awareness. Learning to ask the right questions may not make us feel happy, but finding the right answers definitely will.

Looking for answers outside ourselves keeps us *very busy*. Too busy to stop, look and listen - the first rule we are taught as children when crossing a street, and the first thing we need to do when opening up to our inner guidance. We often become so busy trying to change ourselves, switching from one good intention to another, from one self-improvement project to the next, that we lose sight of the reason we were trying to cross the street in the first place. Perhaps not knowing what we really wanted was making us blind to our true nature. Perhaps we ourselves, through our well-intentioned but misdirected efforts, had become... a blind man trying to cross a busy intersection.

While awareness may not be enough to make you happy, it does open your eyes to what is missing from your life. And if your immediate goal is simply to be less unhappy than you now are, then the first step has already been taken. Goals that will bring you safely and soundly to the other side will be revealed along the way.

The blind man isn't trying to cross the street - *you* are. Your ego doesn't know what you need in order to be happy - *you* do, deep inside at the core of your being. You should definitely make your way *there* before you go anywhere else. Because that's where you'll find the answers you're looking for.

"*Can I get some... street wisdom, to go?*" Recall what was said earlier about... a life well lived is a life well served. Next time you see a blind man standing on a curb, ask yourself if this might be *you* in another guise. And then ask him if he would like to cross the street. If he asks you what it's like on the other side, say to him:

The other side of life is about being happy. It's where a person gets to when they know what they really want in life and take steps to achieve that. Let me help you get there. I will be your eyes so that you can see where you're going, and your ears so that you can hear the voice of wisdom deep inside. If you take my arm and we cross together, you'll make it to the other side. Together, we'll make it to ... the sunny side of the street.

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He is the originator of Core-Oriented Coaching[®], an innovative and highly effective model he developed as a result of integrating diverse therapeutic and coaching modalities. He provides professional training in this and supervision for coaches, psychotherapists and other health care professionals to incorporate these principles and methods into their practice.

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