

# **The Option Method Institute**

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

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**Unhappy Motivation**

**Fear of Being Stupid**

From

**Monday Night Study Group, 1973**

**Bruce Di Marsico**

## Outline

- Since the ultimate goal is happiness, unhappiness always fails to achieve what it sets out to achieve.
- If our happiness depends on getting what we want, then we will fear to even want in the first place.
- Our wanting is happier if we are willing to want without knowing the outcome.
- Stupidity is the fear of being stupid, which makes us unable to think clearly.
- The cause of chronic anger is anger at oneself based on the judgment that anger is bad.

## Introduction

In this talk, Bruce Di Marsico discusses the drawbacks of using unhappiness as our motivation. Since the ultimate goal is happiness, unhappiness always fails to achieve what it sets out to achieve. Ultimately, if our happiness depends on getting what we want, then we will fear to even want in the first place.

Our wanting is happier if we are willing to want without knowing the outcome. Since wanting something is the most likely way to achieve something, this is also the most effective attitude.

Some examples of unhappiness being a counterproductive motivation: stupidity is the fear of being stupid, which makes us unable to think clearly: we end up thinking about our "not being able to think" instead of thinking about what we fear being stupid about. The cause of chronic anger is anger at oneself based on the judgment that anger is bad. In general, judging that a personality attribute is "bad" only amplifies it.

## READINGS

### Unhappy Motivation

Unhappiness can make the goal impossible, especially if the goal is happiness . . . and since the goal is happiness, unhappiness makes it absolutely impossible.

But unhappiness also makes all those things impossible that call for ease of body, that call for relaxedness, that call for lack of tension, that call for clear thinking.

Many do not let themselves want, but believe they must first ascertain if they're able to achieve what they want. There is no problem in wanting to estimate your probability of success; happy people might want to do that too. But when we're unhappy, why do we want to estimate our probability of success? The person who predicts that they'll be unhappy if they do not achieve what they want, they'll be in a position of saying to themselves, "Well, if I can't get what I want, I don't dare want.", and so can't now decide whether they really want it or not until they know whether they can get it.

Many things can't be gotten unless you want them, such as personality states, and if we insist that we be guaranteed getting them, we are doomed before we even start.

So the problem is not in wanting to estimate the probabilities of success. I want to repeat that. Both happy and unhappy people do that. But the unhappy person wants to estimate for a reason, which is something like, "If I don't get it I'll be unhappy, and if I'm going to be unhappy I better not even want it." Wanting leads to unhappiness, with this belief.

If we hedge it on the condition of getting what we want, we wouldn't even efficiently estimate whether we can get it or not because now we're thinking through fear and out of fear, and out of, "If I don't get it I'll be unhappy. Oh boy I better make sure I can get it before I can even let myself want it." And that becomes a big game because you wouldn't even want to estimate unless you've already decided that you wanted it somehow on some level.

If we don't freely want, we will not even begin anything. After a while we'll get to see ourselves as people who do not want to get, and that only leaves us with a sense of depravation, a sense of stupidity, and a sense of paralysis. The antidote is obvious: if we are willing to want before we even know whether we will get it or not, in other words by not fearing not getting, but not needing to get, then we can increase our wanting, increase the probability of having it, increase the chances of success, increase our estimation abilities, increase our happiness. If we can want without even knowing whether we're going to get, we'll be happier. Unhappiness is only help us to do that.

So if we make our happiness contingent on getting we wouldn't even allow ourselves to want, we couldn't even begin wanting. And if you can't want, you can't get.

Let's say, for instance, you're screwing a screw into a hole, which depends on a certain competence and skill of your own. If your fear is that if you don't do it you'll be unhappy, that has to destroy wanting, it has to increase the fear of not doing it. If screwing it depends on any kind of calmness in the hand, any kind of relaxedness at all that won't be possible. If you even increase your fear of not succeeding even more in any way you won't even begin to pick up the screwdriver. You can so destroy wanting that you don't want to screw in the screw! You start off by wanting and wind up not wanting, not being able to move, which now leads you to see yourself as somebody who doesn't do what they want to do, which is a very hopeless feeling. It leads to tremendous depression.

"I can't even want what I want," becomes our feeling. "I'm afraid that I really don't want what I do want and I see myself not doing what I want to do." And I guess all of us could write a list of things that we say we want to do and don't do. And if we look very closely we'll see that this is the phenomena that is taking place behind it, because we've already set it up that if we don't do it we'll be unhappy, and that's why we won't do it, why we can't even begin to do it.

### **Fear of being stupid**

If after wanting to learn you began feeling, "I'll be unhappy if I don't learn," forget it. That's the end of it. You will not learn. To whatever degree you need to learn, to that degree you will never learn.

The more you believe you *need* to learn, the less you learn. The most "stupid people" that you'll ever meet are the ones that really think thinking is tremendously important. We might make the mistaken guess of saying, "the reason they think thinking clearly is so important is because they're stupid." No, it's the other way around. They are stupid because they think thinking clearly is so important. And by so important I mean something to be unhappy about if we don't achieve it.

If it's really okay not to think clearly, we can let ourselves still know that we want to think clearly, and thinking is one of those processes that just by wanting it makes it so. If you do anything more or less than want it, it becomes impossible. If you began with the belief that it's possible for me not to think...that's it. That's not wanting it, because if it's possible for me not to think, then I can begin to be afraid of doing that. You can't really then be in touch with wanting to do it because you're really into the fear of not doing it.

Now, how can you extinguish the fear of not thinking? By thinking or not thinking, which is it? And you're faced with one of those two ways. The only way you can extinguish the fear of not thinking is by not thinking further. We can

overcome that whole phenomena by knowing that even perchance, if for some reason you couldn't think, if you knew that it wasn't for lack of wanting to think. If the reason you couldn't think was because there was something chemical going on or electrical going on, you'd never be upset about it. People who really have brain dysfunction are not upset that they have brain dysfunction. You can only be upset about it when you think you are the cause of it, and when you know you are, when you are doing it.

So if a person had the confidence that, "I may not think of some things, I may not understand what I'm about to hear, I may not comprehend it at all but that won't be for my lack of wanting to," they can really be okay, because the only reason that the fear is there is to increase their wanting. The only reason that the fear is there is to affirm to themselves that they really do want to learn. So if they could stick with, "I really do want to understand, and there's no reason that I won't learn insofar as it's within my power as long as I keep wanting to." If it's not within their power, all the worrying and fearing the in the world is not going to change anything.

### **More examples of unhappy motivation**

Consider anger, depression, jealousy – most of the personality traits that we have that we make judgments on. If we fear our own personality traits, whatever they may be, we intensify them. The angriest person you've ever met is the person who hates anger most. Again, we may make the mistake of assuming, "Oh, the reason they hate anger so much is because they're so angry all the time." No, it's the other way around. The reason they're so angry all the time is because they hate anger so much, because they need to not be angry. And he just absolutely hates himself for being angry. Who is angrier except people who hate themselves, and hate their anger?

And yet such a person believes that it might be possible for themselves, and that it's possible for everybody else, to not to be so angry, "How come I'm so angry?" If he gets angry enough at himself and hates himself enough, maybe he won't be angry, but that's the cause of anger: self-hate. The most angry person is most angry because the hate anger most. They're most judgmental about anger. We very frequently get into that, trying to root out what we call so-called personality defect. We've got this tremendous system that points to certain kinds of behavior as it as being defects or wrong or bad. And they really don't do anything to anybody, but somehow we've gotten to believe that they're wrong because we hope to use that to stop ourselves. Instead of wanting, we're using fear as the motivation.

We get all the symptoms from fear, expressions of our having lived with fear, having lived by fear: headaches, stomach aches, anger, bad temper, bad smell, whatever. When we go to root them out we use the same technique again: fear of them, anger at them, hatred of them, dislike or disapproval of those things, judgments upon them. So for instance, as stupidity is from fear, when we try to

root out stupidity with more fear, we only wind up being more stupid. When anger is from fear, we try to root out the anger with more anger, we end up more angry with more fear. It's as if we were using an immunization technique that doesn't work. It's like in order to cure cancer you get more of it, in order to cure tuberculosis you get more of it. "I'll show myself. That'll stop me."

And so all of these things that have to do with your own personalities, no one of you will be more destined to fail than whichever one of you is the most into a self-improvement project. And any of you who have any idea of improving yourselves has got to be the one most destined to fail because that word improvement by what I mean is loaded with disapproval, loaded with the concept of fear.

That's why diets don't work. People on diets can't get into wanting, they're always into fearing and the cause of their eating is fear, and so they always want to console themselves. So they make themselves feel bad about going off the diet, then they go on a binge to console themselves. Now they feel so bad that they failed on the diet that day. Say they were on a diet, they're losing weight, now one day they felt bad and their symptom of feeling bad is to eat, that's the way they express their fear and console themselves, so she'll have an extra piece of cake or a piece of pie or a sundae or whatever. Now she went and did that, "Oh, no!" She did that out of unhappiness, and now she becomes unhappy that she did that because she's off her diet. She becomes so depressed, "Forget the diet!" The diet now only becomes an occasion for failure; the diet now only becomes another thing by which she can fail and feel bad. "I'll go on it again next week, starting next Monday," and so she goes on a binge again.

Now the person who can succeed on a diet is when they go off a diet knows, "I did that 'cause I felt bad, I did that 'cause I was unhappy," stands up, brushes themselves off, and goes right back to their diet. They'll succeed. But a person who tries to counter-act their so-called failing on a diet with more fear won't succeed. And so the average fat person that you've met will tell you that they've lost thousands of pounds in their life. It's an on-again off-again type of thing because their motive and their way of using it has been the very same thing that's always caused their gaining weight: fear, disapproval.

### **Wanting without knowing the outcome**

So we can increase our wanting if we'll just be willing to want before we even know what the outcome is going to be. Let's want it first, then estimate it, then see if it's possible, then see if we want to go through all the trouble that it may take. Let's see if we then want the intermediate steps. But first, let us get in touch with wanting, and in doing that we can clear all the middle ground and we can properly evaluate it for ourselves and we can really be in touch with what we might want more. And then our life can be, "I want this, but I want that more." And there's no sense of deprivation, there's no sense of failure. There's no sense of never having been what you wanted.

Say I want to learn the piano by this time next year what will I need to do to get to that? Now you could begin with, “Well, I don’t know. Let’s just try now and learn the piano.” Fine, in a short while you’ll begin to see that you’re not making too much progress unless you give it a little more time. And the question immediately comes up, “Do I want to spend more time practicing the piano or do I want to spend more time doing other things that I like?” That sets up this kind of a process of choosing, “What do I want more?” That is going to be determined by another ultimate goal. And so, you’re not going to be able to make that decision unless you get in touch with an ultimate goal and compare them. And in each way the ultimate goal that’s the more “important one” is the one that’ll win regardless of the intermediate steps that might involved.

I want to learn the piano by next year and in order to do that I find that I’ll have to practice more. But by practicing more I’m going to work less hours, I’ll have to take some time off of work or find a job that takes time or cut down on my social life or something like that. Let’s say it means I’m just going to have to work less hours.

And then you start making the decision, “What do I want to work for and what do I want to learn the piano for?” Whatever’s behind each of them have now come into conflict, have now become a question. And I haven’t thought about it really, why I wanted to work and why I wanted to play the piano. But now that’s it’s going to be a tradeoff, whatever it is that I want to play the piano for is now in conflict for whatever it is I want to work for. And I just compare the two of them and the one that’s more important to me, or the one that I want more, determines my choice. And I want to play the piano more because it’ll make me more popular at parties and give me greater love. And I want to work more because it’ll give more money and enable me to throw nicer parties.

Okay, now you still haven’t done it. So you go to the next step: what makes a nicer party, playing the piano or having more money? And whichever it is that you’re finding is more important is going to be the choice for you.

## Questions for Reflection

What would you do if you knew you could not fail?

Would you still do those things if you knew there was a small likelihood you would fail? A great likelihood you would fail?

How do these three scenarios (knowing you could not fail, a small likelihood you would fail, a large likelihood you would fail) impact the intensity of your desire?

What do you imagine would happen if you had the same intensity of desire when there was a great likelihood you might fail, as when you knew you could not fail?

What personality attributes do you judge negatively in yourself?

How do you judge others when they evaluate these personality attributes negatively?

Do you judge yourself the same way when you evaluate your own personality attributes negatively?

Are you now judging yourself negatively as "the type of person who judges themselves?"

### **Meditation for the Week**

- If we are willing to want before we even know whether we will get it or not then we can increase our wanting, increase the probability of having it, increase the chances of success, increase our estimation abilities, increase our happiness.