

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

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How Emotions Happen

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Bruce Di Marsico

Stimulus-Organism-Response

The scientific model we're using is the scientific model of most of the biological sciences. It's called S-O-R, stimulus-organism-response. If you leave out the word "organism," the "O" in S-O-R, that's the scientific model of physics, chemistry, and the other sciences. What it basically amounts to is that for every stimulus, there is a response. There are such laws in physics as “for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.” The action would be stimulus, the equal and opposite reaction would be response. That's the way chemistry works. You do mix these two chemicals, that's your stimulus, you get your chemical reaction, that's your response.

That's the common model for most of the way the universe works. In science, the mind has nothing to do with it. It doesn't matter what you think about the chemical reaction, it's still going to happen the way it happens. It doesn't matter what you think about the ball bouncing; you drop the ball, it's going to bounce. It's stimulus-response, and the mind has nothing to do with it.

Stimulus-organism-response is often used as a psychological model, and is based on the biological model. For example, you have a plant. It's producing chlorophyll, which is the response, but that was caused by light, which is the stimulus. Actually, it's a little more complicated; it's light plus water plus nutrients in the soil. Light does not cause chlorophyll, but when the light strikes or stimulates the organism, what's going on inside the organism now, coupled with that stimulus, yields chlorophyll. So the organism becomes the middle term between stimulus and response.

If the stimulus changes, then, frequently, the response changes. The organism is the intermediary variable. Now, that's a model in the life sciences. For instance, you have the stimulus of food. What the organism does with that food produces the response called growth. Food doesn't cause growth. If I smear food all over

you, it doesn't mean you grow. It's got to go into the organism; it's got to affect the organism. And it's the organism that's really doing the responding, not the stimulus, whereas in the other sciences, the stimulus in itself causes the response, for instance, as a transfer of energy. If I laid a ball in the middle of the floor here and I took another ball and rolled it into it, that'd be the stimulus. It would hit that second ball. That ball would move. The stimulus transfers energy, and it's the energy that moves the ball. So the ball is moved by the energy of the first ball that's transferred to it, and its own energy is released and goes on.

The ball doesn't make any decisions. It's just strictly stimulus-response. The idea of stimulus-organism-response is abused and ignored in many of the psychological sciences. For instance, I'm hearing on the news all the time about victims of crimes. "The person is now going to have trauma. The person is scarred for life." These are considered very wise statements by the news, by lay people, but those statements are first being made by so-called scientists, and that's where we're getting them. The psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers are promoting this myth that totally leaves out organism.

There is no scientific reason why someone who has experienced pain, for instance, will be scarred for life. It is just that the rest of society will see to it. But how they will see to it will be through this intermediary variable called the organism. The event of pain on a person cannot in itself cause the response called "scarred for life," or any such thing. It has got to first be effected by the state of the organism, whatever the attitude and the beliefs of the organism are. There is a variable. It is the person. And that will account for why some people will respond differently to violence than other people will, and why people can experience the same stimulus and have totally different responses. We're going to talk about it in terms of beliefs and judgments. But even if you talked about it in terms of their nutrition or you talked about it in terms of their genes, you still have to admit that the intervening variable is the organism. That is what makes the difference. So that every stimulus does not cause the same response in a human being in terms of

behavior.

Pain does not have a given emotional response. For each and every person, regardless of what you might want to determine is the reason for that difference, there is a difference. It's that intervening organism variable that we've got to stress here. We've got to think of everything in terms of the organism. Without the organism, the stimulus response is a mechanistic, non-human, non-biological concept. It is strict mechanics.

Now the only response we're concerned with is the response we call emotional behavior, or emotions. There are many, many variables that may lead to human behaviors. But what has got to be clear is that if a human behavior is in any way emotional, the variable in the organism is different than the behavior that is not emotional. For instance, using stimulus-organism-response, in the medical model, the stimulus would be a virus. The organism would be the body's immune system. Response would be symptoms. That's a living organic chain. Stimulus-organism-response. But for those with a deficient immune system, there may be no symptoms. Does a virus cause symptoms? Not even in the medical model does a virus cause symptoms. The virus has to deal with the intervening variable, the organism, and the organism responds. So even in the medical model, a stimulus does not cause a given response, a predetermined response, in cases like viruses. Now, there are mechanical models that sound like medical models, which is if I take a hammer and I slam it against your shin and your shin splinters and breaks. That's a mechanical model. Even though a medical doctor may get involved with treating and trying to heal the broken bones, the actual breaking of the bone is the mechanical model. The intervening variables in there will be the condition of your leg to begin with. If it was a wooden leg, you will visit a carpenter. If you already had a preexisting condition of arthritis, that would affect treatments. If you have hemophilia, that causes other things. So not everybody who gets a broken leg also has the same total biological response.

Again, what makes all the difference is the organism. We've got to keep that term the largest. In "S-O-R", you could imagine a little tiny "S," a little tiny "R," and a huge "O" because the organism is really all you're going to have to deal with. The organism is all we're concerned with. That's all there is for us to deal with. The stimulus, in terms of any practice that we're going to be concerned with here is not your concern, and neither is the response. You have to deal with the organism.

So I can't underline enough the word "organism." That's the scientific basis upon which the Option Method is based. There are sciences that propose to use this model, S-O-R, and there is nothing in that "O" except their preconceptions and their ideas. In other words, where the "O" is whatever *they* happen to think, and they're not really dealing with the "O." That approach is erroneous, untrue, and not valid.

That brings us to the biological psychological model. What's true does not matter. It's what the organism *thinks* is true. That falls under this thing called belief. In human behavior, a given event, or more precisely, the perception of the event, is the stimulus. What the organism does with that is what causes the response. So the event, however it's perceived, affects the organism in the sense that the organism has a belief or a judgment about that event. The event plus the belief or judgment yields the emotion or the behavior. This is the model of human behavior: with a given event, the event comes to a person who has a whole system of beliefs.

There are three kinds of possible judgments: good, not good/not bad, and bad. The responses then are happy, okay, and unhappy, meaning this: There's an event, and the perception of it. If the event is judged as good, the response is happiness, and the person is happy. If the event is judged as neither good nor bad, the response is neutral. If the event is judged as bad, then the response is unhappy. And that's the way it works, it's that simple.

You want to know why a person is traumatized, in other words, feels miserable, frightened, scared, unhappy? Well, which one of these three judgments must they have made? They must have made the judgment that what happened is bad. Similarly, all the people who are saying the person will be traumatized, they observed the event, so they must have already judged the event. Their grave mistake is that they believe everybody must judge the event the way they do, and everybody will judge the way they do. So since the crime victim will judge the way I judge, the crime victim will feel as bad as I feel.

I have summarized this as “Stimulus, Belief, Response”. Notice I substituted the word "belief" for organism because that's what we're concerned with. We're not concerned with bloody noses and bad backs and broken legs and stuff like that. We're concerned with an organism insofar as it is a believing organism. Instead of belief, I could also use the word "judgment". The belief that I think something is good is the judgment that something is good, the belief that it's bad is the judgment that something is bad, and not having a belief and not making a judgment is what I call "neither." In sum, human emotions are a response to human beliefs about any event, whether the events be human or not, whether the event is mechanical, physical even if the event is not real and if it's imagined. Whatever the event is, it doesn't matter, because it is the human judgment, the human belief, that causes a human response.

It doesn't really matter whether someone really is a thief or is a murderer or not, but if another person thinks they are, then how they judge thief or murderers is going to be their response. It doesn't matter then if it's true or not that you're a liar, and if someone perceives you to be, that doesn't matter, either. It's how they judge liars that is going to produce their emotional response.

Don't get hung up on the words “good, bad, and neither” in themselves. These are model words. Does right and wrong exist? Well, for some people that's the way to look at it: things are right and wrong, people are healthy or neurotic.

Nothing really causes any given response except in strict Stimulus-Response. In strict Stimulus-Response, mechanical or physical stimuli will cause a mechanical or physical response. But when there's an organism involved we're talking about the response of the organism. So, if we're talking about a person crying: the person (organism) has the response (crying). With a person laughing, it's the organism laughing. You can't say the joke caused the laugh. If the joke caused the laugh, there'd be no such thing as a bad comedian.

Option is only concerned with beliefs, not events or responses.

The nature of belief in itself is to some degree transient. We've all had the experience of believing things or changing our beliefs about them. If there is a really loud sound, for instance, one person may believe there's a danger involved and will respond accordingly. Another person will not believe there's a danger and respond accordingly. That's not emotion itself. That's not either happy or unhappy or frightened or not frightened. For example, you could go into a science lab, a chemist can make an explosion that scares you, but he's not the slightest bit concerned. He knows it's harmless, just loud. My response to what I believe constructs a whole different scenario about what was happening.

So, the truth of what is happening is not particularly important. It's how I respond to what I think is happening that's going to make me happy or unhappy. What I think is happening is the stimulus to which I am reacting, which may not have anything to do with what's really happening.

Another example: let's say you got upset that a dear friend lied to you, or at least you thought they lied to you, and then they were able to convince you that they didn't lie to you. And you'll say, "Now I no longer believe you lied to me and now I feel better." That is not what an Option therapist is going to deal with. The

therapist, and what you want to deal with for yourself, is going to be “but if you *did* believe they lied to you, why is unhappiness the response?” Because the whole world has believed in stimulus-response as all there is, many approaches try to “correct” the perception and thereby change the stimulus. “Lying makes me unhappy. I’m glad to find out you didn’t lie. Now I don’t have to be unhappy.” There is no concept or awareness at all that their judgment is what made them unhappy, not the lie.

Because they've got this rigid judgment that I'm unhappy about lies and happy about not being lied to, the approach is to see if you can convince me that you didn't lie to me, or you didn't steal from me or you didn't mean what you did. If somebody bumps into somebody, then another person may be upset if they thought it was deliberate. But if they find out it was an accident, and the person is very apologetic, "I didn't mean it, I'm so sorry," the response is totally different. But it really was the same stimulus, wasn't it? So really what happened is when you thought the person lied to you, there was a certain stimulus, something they said or didn't say, and you felt bad. Then when they convinced you they didn't lie to you, what really changed? Not the stimulus. They changed your belief about it, and that's really why you responded. They don't see that. They think they changed the stimulus. But they changed your belief about it and that's why your response is different.

It's never been truth or the lack of it that causes emotional responses. You might, indeed, be mistaken about what you think is the event, but given that, what you believe about what you think happened is what causes your emotional response.

People who deal with mental illness very frequently think that the only problem is a mistaken perception, and they try to help the person have proper perception of the event. "No, your mother and father have not been trying to poison you."

"Your mother loves you. She doesn't really want to kick you out of the house.

She just wants you to behave better." A lot of social workers think that that's their

job, and it is also that way in the psychoanalytic profession. Many people in so-called helping professions think that their job is to help change the perception of the event so that the person who would have to feel bad about the original perception, once they have a new perception, they won't have to feel bad about it. "So if you could see that your mother doesn't really hate you, I've done my job, now you'll feel better."

Let me have two volunteers. One, do the stimulating, one do the response. Person one, say something for which person two can have some kind of an opinion or a response to.

Person one: It's warm out today.

Person two: No, I don't agree. It's pretty cold.

What did you see happening? Did you see Stimulus-Organism-Response? Did person one have to speak? Did person two have to respond? Then you saw the organism. Did person two have to respond? Do you know that person two didn't have to respond? Lots of people don't know that. They never see that part of it. "Of course he responded, he was spoken to." He didn't just respond because he was talked to. I want you to be very conscious of the organism. I want the organism to loom large. The questions were insignificant to what happened. It caused nothing. He did not have to respond at all. That's part of the system of the organism: a decision, a choice. To respond at all takes judgment, takes a belief, which can only be done by the organism. From now on, I'm going to call "organisms" persons, which is what they are in our case.

We're discussing here how people get unhappy. Not whether they should, or they shouldn't, or it's good or it's bad, or anything else about it. Strictly scientifically, how people get unhappy begins with a stimulus, which is an event or the perception of an event. It really doesn't matter. We're not concerned with that because that has nothing to do with how people get unhappy. It's either a real

event or they perceive an event to be a certain way. It doesn't matter what the event actually is because the unhappiness depends on how they perceive it.

An example: If somebody faints, and I'm aware that they have a tendency to faint, and you are not, I might perceive them as just having fainted. You may perceive them as having dropped dead. That isn't what determines the emotional behavior. I may think that fainting is a horrible, terrible thing and feel very, very bad about their fainting. You may perceive dropping dead as a perfectly normal – you're the doctor, and you just think they died and that's that. It doesn't mean anything to you. It's not the event, it's how you then judge the event that determines emotional behavior.

So we're not really concerned with the event. I don't get into arguments with a client about the event, or about how they perceived the event. "So-and-so is out to poison me." Who am I to judge? I don't even try to decide whether that's true or not because that isn't the point. And it's not even the point *why* they perceive it that way. You can go on endlessly trying to convince a paranoid that nobody's trying to poison them. That isn't the point. You are only dealing with if the event is judged as a reason for *unhappiness*.

There's a perception of an event. If you judge it as good, you feel happy. If you judge it as bad, you feel bad or unhappy. If you judge it as neither good nor bad, you feel okay. The event itself is nothing. It doesn't affect the way you feel one way or the other. Those are the dynamics of emotional behavior. It's that simple – that's all there is to it. There is no emotional behavior that does not fit this paradigm. You can have an identical response to two different events as long as the judgments are the same. Some people don't like rainy days, and they get unhappy at rainy days because they're dark. Others get unhappy because they forgot their umbrella. Others get unhappy because it's raining. Others get unhappy because they can't find a cab. They're all unhappy about the rainy day for all different perceptions and all different reasons, but it's all bad. They all judge it

as bad.

Here is an extended illustration: a young girl has just graduated from high school and she's going off to college 200 miles away from home, and she's going to be living there. She's not coming home during the week, probably not most weekends. Mommy sees this as terrible. She doesn't like it. She wishes she went to school in town, to the nearby college. She just sees the whole thing in terms of her loss of her little girl, her loss of her companion, her loss of her helpmate, and she thinks it's terrible. She thinks that's a bad situation. So how does she feel then about the girl going off to school? She sees her loss as bad, so she's unhappy. On the other hand, her little sister sees her older sister going off to school. She's going to have the room to herself. She's going to have the phone all to herself. She thinks it is just marvelous. It's going to do wonders for her social life. She's going to be able to have boys in the house without her older sister making fun of them. She sees it as wonderful. How does she feel? Sister sees it as good, she feels good.

The father has mixed emotions. The father is proud that his little girl is growing up. He's glad that she's going off to a really good school. He sees advantages to that. But yet he's going to miss his little girl and he's going to wish she would visit home a little more often. So he sees her having these good opportunities as really good, and he likes that, and he feels happy about that, but he sees also his loss to some extent, and he feels a little unhappy about that. So he's a little happy and a little unhappy. Mixed emotions. But you see, but the parts that he judges as bad, he feels unhappy about. He also sees it honestly as good, and he feels good, so he feels both good and bad.

They're all standing on the porch saying goodbye to Susie who's going off to college. So mom is feeling bad, little sister is feeling good, and the father is having mixed emotions. And on the sidewalk walking past is the mailman, and he sees Susie leaving, too. He doesn't even know her. He doesn't judge, it doesn't

mean anything to him. How does he feel? He doesn't feel. He sees it as not good, not bad. He sees it just strictly as an event upon which he's not making a judgment and so, therefore, he just feels whatever he was feeling ten feet away and the same thing he'll feel ten feet further on. Unchanged emotions. So the emotions change by the judgment. If you judge it as good, you feel good; if you judge it as bad, you feel bad; if you don't judge it at all, you feel no different from how you had been feeling. If you were already feeling good, you'll still feel good. If you were already feeling bad, you'll still feel bad.

Now, that's the way emotions really work. This is the paradigm for emotions. That it doesn't have to do with how children are brought up, but with how they judge how they were brought up. It doesn't have to do with wars or peace, but with how people judge wars or peace. It doesn't have to do with nutrition. It is not health that causes emotions, it is what you believe about your health, your judgments about it. Those things are perceptions or perceptions of events. Your physical condition is an event for you that you judge. If you're tired, that's not an emotional state. It's just a physical state. You're tired, that's all. How you feel about being tired? That tired is bad? You shouldn't feel tired? "I must be doing something wrong if I'm tired? I'm not eating right?"

That belief is going to affect your feelings, not the tiredness. Now, the feeling you feel after you've judged your tiredness is bad, you may have even learned in our society to call that feeling tiredness. First you're tired, but now you believe that tired is bad. Now you're going to have a feeling, an emotional feeling in the same body that's feeling the tiredness. So now it's a tired body believing tiredness is bad. You may have learned to start calling that whole feeling tiredness. You may say, "Oh, I feel tired," but it's tired plus "sick and tired". Sick and tired of being tired is quite a bit different than merely being tired. The judgments can get very much mixed in with the physical sensations, and so then, in our practice, we have to realize that we can be dealing a lot with that.

People often say that, "I'm sick and tired" of this and that, and they actually feel somewhat sick and somewhat tired because they're depressed. "Sick and tired" is an emotional statement, by and large.

All Emotions come from Judgments

All emotions come from these judgments. There are millions of professionals and many other professionals and the whole world in fact is worked on a different basis: "You don't want to be unhappy? Well then, you stop doing this and stop acting that way. You don't want to be unhappy anymore? Well then, divorce your husband. Your children are really getting you down? Well, you better start taking some parenting classes and learn how to be a better parent. Or take tough love classes and learn how to be a better parent." Or whatever it is, learn some behavioral way to enforce and control other people's behavior. If you ignore that judgments are the causes of emotions, and are the only causes of emotions, whether good, bad, to whatever degree, you're going to have to relinquish power.

For instance, if not having money makes you feel bad, namely, if the stimulus of the perception of not having money is the actual cause of feeling bad, there's only one solution: you have to make money. If being sick is the only cause of being unhappy about being sick, then you have to get well. If losing something makes you unhappy, then you have to get the power to gain it. If the things that we have been told to cause unhappiness are the actual causes of unhappiness, then we have to seek power. So the world is very strongly motivated to seek power, not in order to just simply have power and better control of their environment, but because they need power to have better control over their environment in order to eliminate their unhappiness. If it's true that things and events cause unhappiness, then you need power, and only people with enough power over their environment to make it be what they want it to be can be happy. The implication would be that they want things to be the way they are because not having them that way makes them unhappy.

If the only justification for wanting things is "I'm going to be unhappy if I don't have them," and then you get them, the next thing you want, you're going to have to be unhappy to motivate yourself to get it. So if you made your first million dollars by being scared to death of being poor, you'll make your second million dollars again by being scared to death of being poor or scared to death of losing the first million, and you make your third million by being scared to death of losing your first two million, and so on.

There are real, actual people who have two, three, and four children in order to have insurance, so they have a few to spare, so if some of them die, they still have children. I hear it on the news, crying that it was their only child, implying that if they had had another one, it wouldn't be so bad.

We've all experienced that getting power doesn't necessarily make you happy. I think that that doesn't prove anything to anybody. No one has seen God and they keep on believing it. Nobody's seen the devil and they keep on believing it. When you're dealing with matters of faith, facts don't matter. In fact, what people generally do is believe they just haven't done it right. "If it didn't work to get me happy, well, then there must be something else I need to get to be happy, and I was just mistaken thinking that if I made a million dollars, I'd be happy. It didn't make me happy. I know! I need a more devoted wife." Or you have a friend who says, "No, buddy, what you need is a hobby. Start bowling." You need something else.

Needing and Wanting

That idea is that you're always needing something in order to be happy. If it is things in themselves that make us unhappy, then it is power that we need. If somebody's insulting you makes you unhappy, then you have to shut them up or avoid them. If someone's assaulting you makes you unhappy, then you have to have power to prevent assault. The idea being that, if it's true that things make us unhappy, we need power then over these things, and so people has often sought power in order to avoid unhappiness. That leads to the concepts of need and want.

These are models. I divide things between need and want just simply to make a useful distinction. Don't get married these words. We can use the word "needs." I've seen people that I've trained and I've helped scared to death to use the word "need." By doing that, you've distorted what I'm talking about. We speak English. I can say, "I need this" and "I need that." I'm talking about a feeling, the feeling of needing something in order to be happy, that without it, you can't be happy. That's what I mean by "need." It's a feeling, and it's usually expressed one of two ways. I will be unhappy if I don't get this thing. We then say that's the feeling of needing it. "I really am unhappy if I can't get love." That's called the feeling of needing it, and it's a natural kind of feeling that people have. It's a sad feeling, it's a frightening feeling. Unhappiness, basically, is the belief that I will be unhappy if I don't get what I need, if I don't get this thing.

Whether you use the word "need" or not doesn't matter. If you're going to get unhappy if you don't have it, that's called unhappiness. Whereas wanting it, just simply, purely wanting it, I would be happy if I get it. Instead of "I will be unhappy if I don't get it and unhappy if I don't avoid it", it would be "I will be happy if I get it, I will be happy if I avoid it, or I will not be unhappy if I don't get it, I will not be unhappy if I can't avoid it." There are two kinds of motivation or desire: the belief that they'll be happy if they can get it or they'll be happy if it's something they don't like and they can avoid it. Or unhappiness which says "I'll be

unhappy if I don't get it or I'll be unhappy if I don't avoid it." The unhappy person feels, "I'll be unhappy if I don't get it. I'll be disappointed if I don't get it. I'll feel bad if I don't get it." A happy person is more in touch with, "That'd be nice to get. I'd be happy if I got it." Now, that's a desirable thing.

If it's an undesirable thing like a disease or an accident or a loss of some sort, the happy person says or believes or feels – these are just words to describe feelings – "I'd be happy if I avoided it" An unhappy person would say, "I'd be very unhappy if I can't avoid it. I'd be very unhappy if I don't avoid it." They're opposite feelings. These are the dynamics. Happy motivation is being happy if you get it, happy if you can avoid it if it's something you don't like. So, if the things that you do like, knowing that you'd be happy to get it is happiness. Knowing you'd be happy to avoid it is a happy motivation. Unhappy motivation is using the fear that I'll be unhappy if I don't get the things I want or I'll be unhappy if I don't avoid the things I don't want. It's a kind of a deal you make with yourself, but I'll call it a belief. So needing is deciding that it's bad if you don't get what you want and it's bad if you don't avoid what you want to avoid. People don't need things in order to be happy unless they believe they do. So if you believe you need it in order to be happy, that's what we'll call need.

The word "need" in English is a very simple word. It always takes an indirect object. You need something for something. It always takes the word "for" or the phrase "in order to" after it. You need a knife for cutting. You need a sun for sunlight. You need heat for warmth. You need food for life. You need air for breathing. You need money for buying. But when a person says, "I need love," what do they need love for? That's saying you need it for happiness. Well, you could also need money for happiness. You could need power for happiness. You can make anything that you would want, *needed* for happiness. So you have very wise people saying, "People need love, people need companionship, people need self-respect, people need pride, people need decent housing, people need direction, people need guidance, people need...." Now, these arrogant, authoritarian

statements have no respect for the English language or the mind. Need for what? That's left out. "You know what you need? You need a good, swift kick in the pants." What is the need for? So now it means it's this prescription for what ails you. It's a judgment that there's a disease or an ill or a lack for which needs a solution. And sometimes that's used correctly and sometimes it's not. If you're cold, you need warmth not to be cold. But do you need warmth in order to be happy? Only if you say being cold makes you unhappy. Does cold make anybody unhappy? Going back to our paradigm, how did they get unhappy about it? I have friends from Mexico who think it's the greatest thrill to come up to New England to see the leaves change and the snow fall.

The Nature of Choice

People become unhappy by choice, belief, or judgment. They make a choice on what they're going to believe. If they choose to believe it is good, they will feel good. If they choose to believe it is bad, they feel bad. Why am I using the word "choice"? It's the only thing in life that you can absolutely be sure of is not happening to you.

I call this Option method, or Option psychology, or Option theology, philosophy, anything you want to call it. What I mean by it is this: The word "option" is a Greek word meaning choice, decision. To make a choice among choices. The only choices that I'm concerned with here and the only choices that have anything to do with human emotions are the choice to believe that something is good or the choice to believe that it's bad. That's your option. By making that choice, your emotional responses are determined. You cannot choose to believe that something is good and then feel bad about it, can you? You cannot choose to believe that something is bad and then feel good about it, can you? The emotional response is always consistent with the choice. You can use this to see all these things that seem like mysteries to you when you get unhappy yourself are no mystery. You have never gotten unhappy about something unless you believed it was bad. And

you've never been happy about something unless you believed it was good.

I'm going to show you that the experience of unhappiness is already after the fact. When you're experiencing unhappiness, that's the experience of choosing to believe that something is bad. Remember the word "bad" is just a word. It basically means it brings unhappiness. If you look throughout history or anything else, a thing that's called bad or evil, if the word "for" is not after it, as in "bad for", if it's just "bad," "it brings unhappiness" is all that it means. Cancer is bad for health of the surrounding tissues. Sometimes it's bad for the health of the surrounding total organism. Sometimes it's bad for the health of the person. But that's all that cancer is bad for. To say cancer is bad is to assume that it is in itself bad, must be cured, must be done away with, and it causes unhappiness.

"Poverty is bad" I have known many, many poor people who are not unhappy. And they were not only not unhappy because they were poor, and they were not unhappy in spite of the fact they were poor. They happened to be poor and they happened to be happy about whatever they were happy about. They were happy about their stick houses. I've known people who have no houses and were happy about it, not in spite of it. I have known people who've taken vows of poverty and not only tolerate poverty but seek it out and want it, and they're happy about it. The general belief is that poverty is bad, meaning that it brings unhappiness, can be disproved very easily.

I have known people who do not believe death is bad. In our society is if somebody is suffering for a long time with a sickness or a disease, sometimes people see their death as a blessing, you know, "Thank God, they've died. They're not suffering anymore." It's no more true that my grandmother is no longer suffering from cancer than it is that my great-grandchildren are not suffering from cancer. There are no such people to be not suffering. Things that don't exist, don't exist. If death means people don't exist, then they don't exist. And if it does mean they do exist, who are you to say they're not still suffering?

But what I did want to point out is that it's a judgment, so some people will judge even death as good. I'm not saying that they're smart to do that or it's logical or anything else. There are people who are also happy when people die because they believe they went to heaven. And they really believe it. They just believe that this person has died, has had a successful life, and is now in heaven.

If someone's death causes unhappiness, for all you know, somebody you love may have just died five minutes ago. How come you're not unhappy? If it's the death that brings about unhappiness, then how come it doesn't happen automatically? Wouldn't you have to know about it and judge it and then get unhappy? See, the organism is left out again, the person is left out, the belief is left out.

I want it to become second nature to you that you will never in your life see unhappiness without knowing that what you're seeing is a belief in action. Not something inevitable, not something determined by nature, but a choice. No one is unhappy unwillingly. Lots of things happen to us unwillingly, but our emotions are not one of them. We are not dealing with victims ever when we're talking about emotions. Any client you have who is unhappy is not a victim. Their unhappiness is not proof that they're victims. Oh, they may have been beaten and may be victims, physical victims, but if they're unhappy about the beating, that's their real suffering. That's a worse suffering. And that ultimately is a choice, and the bottom line is, it has to be a choice. That's how people get unhappy.

Some say that the choice was made a long time ago. Perhaps. And aren't you in fact still re-creating and keeping that choice alive? You're still sort of affirming it. I think you're not going to change your mind until you have reason to, and I guess that's the point. We've had many opportunities to question our own suffering in our life and our own unhappiness has been plenty motivation to question but there's one other thing that's been going along with unhappiness

The most significant belief

What we're talking about now is how people get unhappy. There is one belief that is more significant than all: that unhappiness is good. And that's why we wouldn't question it, even though everything in you gives you plenty of motivation to question it, you're suffering and you're in pain. Why? The example I use is this: You will take bitter medicine if you believe it's good for you. You'll swallow the most foul-tasting medicine as long as you have the corresponding belief that it really is good for you. You will put up with the most miserable unhappiness because of some belief about it, about the whole nature of unhappiness, and the whole value of unhappiness.

Exploring some specific emotions

Consider the emotion of guilt. What is the event and the judgment? It's the judgment that some event, whatever the event is, is bad. What must be the event?

Something has to be called bad before you can have an unhappy feeling. What's being called bad is the event. The original event was: you felt good about something. The judgment is: that that's bad to do. It's bad to feel good about something. That's called guilt. So then we know what the judgment must have been.

For example, consider guilt about stealing. Often when a thief sets out to steal, he feels good about his adventure that's coming up and its possible success. Then when he gets caught and it didn't work out, he feels bad about being caught and feels guilty that he was feeling inspired and felt good in the first place about the whole idea of stealing. So the “how” of guilt is feeling bad about feeling good.

Embarrassment: how is that coming about? What's the judgment? It's got something to do with looking bad now, doesn't it? You're looking around to see if anybody saw that you made yourself look bad. That's the how. I made myself

look bad. You can be embarrassed about things that you don't even feel guilty about. If you were all by yourself, you wouldn't care, right? If you were in your own room and you belched, you wouldn't be embarrassed, but if you belched in public, you might be. If you had body odor and you were in your own room and you noticed it, you wouldn't be embarrassed. But you're at a party and then you notice you've got body odor, would you be embarrassed?

It's a belief that you look bad. It may not even be true. I've seen people be embarrassed in front of me, and I didn't care what they did at all. They didn't look bad to me, they looked perfectly normal to me.

How about you're carrying drinks and you trip and fall? We've all lived on this planet, spilling, dropping, it's not unusual or abnormal. So it isn't really that you're not supposed to do that. In normal situations, you don't necessarily feel you're not supposed to do it. You don't want to, but you don't always feel bad about it. So the perceived event would have to be that I've done something that subjects me to other people judging me as bad or undesirable. But what's the perceived event, the stimulus? It's other people's judgment. You're perceiving that other people may make the judgment that you're unattractive, undesirable. It doesn't even matter if it's true. And your judgment on that is that it is a bad thing. This can lead to now two responses: either embarrassment or anger. If you think that the original judgment was bad, you feel angry. In other words, they had no right to make that original judgment. That could be anger. But if you believe that they're right to see you as undesirable, and they're right to make the judgment, you would be embarrassed. So, if you didn't believe that it was bad for them to make the judgment that you look bad and you didn't believe that that judgment was right, you couldn't be embarrassed. It'd be impossible.

Question: If I was giving a talk somewhere and I wondered if it's adequate. If I didn't have the belief that the audience might not think I was adequate, that I wouldn't be embarrassed?

That's true, but what if you *did* believe that they might think you're inadequate? You could think they might think you're inadequate, but if you think they're right or wrong to do that, that is where embarrassment or anger arises. So, for instance, if you're speaking to a bunch of kids who think your story is inadequate, you'd say, "What do they know?" You would not be embarrassed. If you're speaking to a bunch of peers or so-called superiors and telling them your story or giving your report, and you've decided that they are right to say you're inadequate then there is no problem. It's not the judgment that you're inadequate, if you decide that they're right to say you're inadequate. Embarrassment only occurs when you say, "I'm bad for making myself look bad."

The *perceived* event with embarrassment is that you agree that you made yourself look bad. If you agree that you made yourself look bad and then agree that you should not have done that, that it is bad, then you'll be embarrassed. I can agree that in some situations, I've made myself look bad – to a bunch of fools, though. Now, am I embarrassed? No, in fact I'm snotty and haughty and arrogant; I can choose to feel that way, to give you an example. So again, it's still all contingent upon the belief I have. Given the perceived event, that I made myself look bad, that I made myself look inadequate, I have to believe that the way I made myself look, inadequate or otherwise, is a bad way to make yourself look. That I did that to myself and I made myself look bad.

If you saw tripping as a perfectly normal, perfectly human thing to do, and the only real problem with tripping is that you may hurt yourself and that you want to take care of that, what's the issue? If you don't think there's an issue of anybody's judgment there, that nobody has any judgment to make, your enemies will applaud that you've tripped and laugh at you and your friends will try to help you. Where is there room for embarrassment?

But if your friends laugh and you think they're right or your enemies laugh and

you think they're right that it is wrong to trip, especially because it makes you look bad, that it's wrong to be human in certain situations and make yourself look bad, then you'll be embarrassed. So it's a form of saying, "I should not have done what makes me look bad. I should always look good." So people can be embarrassed if they dribble some water or they spill a little food on themselves, they can be embarrassed. Whatever is judged to be bad. But more to the point, if you're embarrassed, who chose to feel that way?

Can you see that if you're embarrassed, you've chosen to be? Because most people think that it just comes over them like somebody has this red blotch they just threw on their face and the heat just built up in their ears. But you chose it. If you're embarrassed, you chose to be.

Physical nervousness is a physical problem. Emotional nervousness is a judgment. If you feel nervous, did you choose to feel that way? Is that the way you want to feel? You must have reasons for feeling that way. Of course you have reasons, but that is the way you want to feel, given those circumstances and given what you think and what you feel and what you believe, that is the way you want to feel. Nobody's doing it to you, so you're left with having to admit you do it. If you had reasons for being nervous, would you then not want to be nervous?

If you're nervous, is that an unhappy response? Is there a belief behind that that can cause that response? You must be believing something is bad. Have you ever been nervous and believing that what's happening is good? That's what you'd call that "excited." There's a difference between excited and nervous, and peaceful and depressed, but they're just a difference between judgments. There are two kinds of happiness: peace and joy (excitement). There are two kinds of unhappiness: sadness and anger. In other words, there's an excited state of unhappiness (there's a whole range of names for that) and there's a peaceful state of unhappiness.

So there's active and passive feelings of unhappiness and active and passive feelings of happiness, and they are two sides of the same coin. If you judge the event as good, you're excited. If you judge it as bad, you're nervous. But why *that* agitated state? You choose that one rather than another one. Have you ever been nervous when you weren't judging something as bad? So your question is, "What is the event?" Some event that you would say is bad causes you to feel nervous.

Nervous is the feeling when it may or may not happen. If you're actually sure it is going to happen, there's another kind of feeling, dread. Nervousness – it's an uncertain event. Excitement is like anticipating something good happening.

Bad means, something that's going to make me feel bad. That's what bad means. Something good means something that's going to make me happy, something bad is something that's going to make me unhappy. That's where the decision is. The decision is in which belief. The feeling is part of it. You decide that.

It's all part of the decision of the belief. If you believe that this is something to feel angry about, you'll get angry. If you decide that it's something to be sad about, you'll feel sad. If you decide that it's something to be mildly annoyed at, you'll feel mildly annoyed. In other words, you can't decide that something will make you furious and then just get mildly annoyed. So the response, the actual response you have, corresponds to the belief.

Our Response as the Event

Sometimes your belief, your own behavior now, or your emotional response becomes a new event that you make a judgment about. For instance, I know somebody that when she feels like she's going to cry, when she starts to feel even the slightest little tears come up in her eyes, she thinks that that's so terrible, and she cries. So then even the feeling that she's going to cry is so horrible to her, so saddening, that she cries over her wanting to cry. But her temptation to cry now

becomes a new event that she then judges. As soon as she sees that she's going to cry, now she sees that as an event that she has now a judgment about. I've seen people cry and be angry that they're crying, really angry that they're crying. I've seen people cry and who laugh at their crying, depending on the judgment they've made on the crying. Or you can bypass the whole thing and just not feel bad at all. Then if you're crying, you know it's not from feeling bad.

Your minds are unstoppable. They're free to judge every single thing that happens, that doesn't happen, that might happen, that could happen, that you can imagine happening. So you know you can judge every single thing or every single nothing. You could judge what might be. So there are people who can work themselves into any kind of a state possible, having no relationship to what's happening. But the dynamics are exactly the same as a person who's responding to what is happening. Sometimes they call them insane: people who have worked themselves into states of great unhappiness over something that has not happened. But how they got unhappy is exactly the same.

Everything can be an event. Our own emotional behavior can then become the new event upon which we judge. So it can go on and on and on and on and go round and round and round. So you can have an emotional response to an outside event and then have an emotional response to your emotional response, then have an emotional response to that. obsessiveness or compulsiveness is just simply, you will find, a bad reaction to a repeated behavior. In other words, a behavior gets repeated and then the person gets worried or upset that they're repeating this behavior. The more worried and upset they get, the more they do it, because the doing of it was coming from worry and upset either the first time or the second time. There may have been a real, acceptable cause for why they did something the first time. But maybe the second time they thought it was because they were upset. In order to say, "This makes me so upset," they have to keep repeating the this. It's like the person who says "shit" and then says, "Oh, I hate saying 'shit.'" , and then, "Oh, shit. I said 'shit.'" "Oh, shit. I said 'shit' three times now. That

means four times. Oh, shit. I've said it five times."

That's a joke, but it's a version of that. "There it goes again. There it goes again. There it goes again." And each time it happens becomes a new opportunity to make the judgment that it's bad and that it's terrible. It's like, "Don't think of the word 'hippopotamus.'" You're trying not to think of it? Well, that's a model of emotions. If you try not to have a certain emotion, that's the emotion you have. Because, see, there's a belief going on. But the very fact that you're trying not to have that emotion, you have the belief that it's about to come. You don't try to hold back a thief who isn't coming through the window! You only try to hold back that which you think is about to come. So people who try to control their internal or external behavior by holding it back have already enforced it by believing it is coming.

The Cause of happiness is in the future

So we make emotions by choice. We'll get into all these which right now you find interesting, all the various kinds of unhappiness, all the various expressions, and there are as many kinds of unhappiness as there are words in the English language. What I basically want you to see is that it is learned. It is a choice and it only happens because of a choice.

I'll start off making what sounds like a cryptic statement. The cause of happiness and unhappiness is in the future. That's all based on this paradigm. The cause of unhappiness is in the future is very simple to demonstrate. If you thought that tomorrow something was going to happen that would make you unhappy, what would you feel now? You'd be unhappy right now about tomorrow. That's a miracle of time.

If tomorrow you knew something was going to happen that you were going to be happy about, you were going to win the lottery, you would be happy now. Why

this paradigm works has to do with the nature of believing, and has nothing to do with what *is*. If you believe you're going to be happy, you are happy now. If you believe you're going to be unhappy, you are unhappy. If you believe you're going to be unhappy in ten minutes, you are unhappy. It isn't even these judgments of good and bad; even though that's all true, all that means, though, somehow, is it boils down to you're going to be unhappy or you're going to be happy in the future.

This judgment that a thing is bad is really the same as her deciding that something is going to make you unhappy. That's why it is called bad. They're the same thing. So now you can take the apparent causality, and reverse it: If you believe that the event is going to make you happy, you judge it as good. If you believe that the event is going to make you unhappy, you judge it as bad. So, going to be happy and going to be unhappy are really the operative beliefs that are the true cause of happiness and unhappiness right now. You have learned to translate everything that happens into its future implications and then have your emotional response to it now.

The cause of your feelings now is what you believe about the future.

So, if you believe you'll be happy about something that'll happen, it doesn't matter whether it's something that'll will actually happen, or doesn't – if you believe you're going to be happy, for whatever reason, you're going to be happy now.

If something bad happened to you today that you were unhappy about, but you believed that tomorrow, in the future, that you will be happy, you automatically start feeling happy.

If you don't judge that anything that's going to happen can make you unhappy, it is going to make you unhappy. You'll be happy now because you're believing you won't be unhappy in the future and that you will be happy in the future. If you were assured by some miracle that in the future you were always going to be

happy, that you'd never be unhappy. And I don't think you have a choice about that. That may seem to go against everything I seem to have to have been saying, but there is an aspect here – there is no choice. If you choose a happy judgment, then happy responses follow. If you choose unhappy judgment, then unhappy emotions follow. The judgment is the only place you have your choice.