

# **The Option Method Institute**

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

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## **Introduction to the Option Method, pt II**

From

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**Bruce Di Marsico**

## Outline

- Unhappiness is often a successful motivator.
- Happiness can always be a better motivator than unhappiness.
- Unhappiness often arises because of a fear of not being motivated to want what we are already motivated to want.
- We often recognize that other people don't need to be unhappy about what we do, but not that we don't need to be unhappy about what they do.
- Unhappiness is also used to prove that we're "good" people.
- Regarding things we don't want, we can be neither happy nor unhappy with them.

## Introduction

In this talk, Bruce Di Marsico continues his introduction to the Option Method.

He discusses that, while unhappiness is often a successful motivator, happiness can always be a better motivator than unhappiness: love of wealth instead of fear of poverty; desire for changes in society instead of hatred for society as it is.

He also discusses some of the fundamental reasons for unhappiness: unhappiness often arises because of a fear of not being motivated to want what we are already motivated to want. Unhappiness is also used to prove that we're "good" people to ourselves.

We often recognize that other people don't need to be unhappy about what we do, but not that we don't need to be unhappy about what they do.

Not being unhappy about something does not imply being happy about it.

Regarding things we don't want, we can be neither happy nor unhappy with them.

## READINGS

On a grand scale, we know what unhappiness does socially. There's a good chance that if people were happier, there wouldn't be stealing and killing and exploiting and warring. If people were happier, they wouldn't be shooting up on dope. So unhappiness takes a very heavy toll. And maybe it does achieve some ends; maybe it is a motivator. If enough people claim it, it must be true, that because of unhappiness, we achieve quite a bit. Many a man has become a millionaire because he was afraid of poverty. But after he became a millionaire, he never gave up that fear of poverty. And he keeps his million dollars, scared to death of losing it. The fear that we use works against us, even though it works for us. The question we ask in the Option Method is: would it be possible for you, for me, to achieve the same things without using unhappiness to get it? Could that man become a millionaire because he wanted to be, because he really wanted it, not because he was scared to death of being poor? Did he have to be afraid of being poor in order to desire to be rich? How many of us will not go to a doctor because we're afraid? Do we have to be afraid of being sick before we'll want to be healthy?

And there are lots of those examples in our lives, where if we look very closely, we may find that we use unhappiness as a motivation and we become very afraid that if we're not unhappy, we just won't be motivated. The civil rights movement in America is a good example of that. Lots of leaders in the civil rights movement used anger, used a very heightened sense of injustice and outrage; they looked around and they saw injustice. To see injustice is one thing; they got outraged about it. And they did that and it motivated them. It moved them to want to change things. Because they have this fire burning inside of them, this acid eating out their stomach, they wanted things to change; they used that to motivate themselves. The question is, could they have been motivated without the anger, without the outrage? Could they have been better leaders then?

Now this becomes a very real question because what happened with many of these leaders is they burnt themselves out. Their anger and their fury and their outrage and their great sense of all the injustices got them angrier and angrier, made them more and more reckless, made them more and more alienated from the very people they were trying to help. Some of the most famous civil rights leaders found themselves turning against their followers and saying: You're not motivated enough to change things. I am sick of you; you're just as bad as those who oppress us. Angry at others for not sharing their anger. Turning people away. Before you know it, reducing to a very small radical group. The greatest achievements in civil rights came in the beginning. And since then, not that much has happened. And what has been most productive has been peaceful determination. That is the question: Does anger take the place of determination? Does unhappiness really take the place of determination?

And so if we explore some of the obvious things that we're unhappy about, we just may find that we don't have to be unhappy about them, that we were mistaken. It's pretty much like this: When we were a child, we tasted a certain food and it tasted horrible to us. We thought it was bad; we thought it was bad for us. We thought we would get sick on it, so we affirmed in ourselves and we took on the belief we'll never eat it again because it's bad. Okay, fine. As a child, that worked. It kept you from throwing up.

Now as an adult, is it still true though? Is it still true that we gag on spinach if we ate it? Many of us have been in for pleasant surprises; we found ourselves eating things as adults that we were surprised we could like. We were surprised that they could taste good. Beliefs change; experiences change. Many of us are stuck with beliefs that we've taken when we were one year old, two years old, beliefs that we've inherited from other unhappy people -- a whole list of things to be unhappy about. You should be unhappy about this, about that, about the other thing, and we've accepted them and we believe them, never questioning them.

We get lots of support, of course; we just look around us and find everybody else is unhappy about the same thing and we assume they have the same reasons. It just seems so obvious. So we suffer and we take our unhappiness into us and we walk around with it, and it's constantly there and we try to fight it. And once we've agreed that we have to be unhappy about something, there isn't much else to do but to blame. If I'm not going to say and I'm not going to admit that the reason I'm unhappy about something is because of some belief of mine – and I want to be happier, remember; we're all striving to be happier, that's all I really want – and if I'm not going to see that some belief of mine that's causing me to be unhappy, what's the first thing that happens? My finger starts to point. Before I know it, I'm going around like this, saying: “you make me unhappy; you did; this did; that did; the other thing did.” And the fingers go flailing outwards and we're blaming everything and everybody for our unhappiness, never looking at the belief that maybe we've outgrown, that maybe doesn't fit anymore, that maybe we don't need.

A well-known therapist said that the whole neurotic struggle was simply one of the neurotic trying to convince everybody else that they're making him neurotic and getting them to change and getting power over them. Convincing everyone of that changes the world. And he said we were faced with two alternatives: Change the world, or ourselves. So many people say: Oh, it's easy to change the world than it is to change me! And we act that way, and we go on a life struggle trying to make our world very small -- let's say maybe consisting of a husband, a wife, a couple of kids -- making the world as small as possible and getting as much control over it as possible. Maybe a little fiefdom called a business or something and getting control over that. Narrowing the world and then getting the control over it. It seems like the way to become happy, yet it never works because it's the beliefs inside that are going to determine the happiness.

We can spend a lot of energy trying to get somebody else to change so that we can

be happy, by using our own unhappiness and telling them they are responsible for our unhappiness, that what they do makes us unhappy. Well, if that's true, you know, then in my story, that little girl that was going off to college, what she did was making her mother unhappy and she was at fault for that. Is that true or not? Well, then she also gets the credit for making her father happy, I suppose, and her sister happy. And of course I'm sure she could take the credit or the blame for making the stranger feel nothing, for being irrelevant to him -- that's her fault, too.

So we have a kind of question: does our happiness or unhappiness come from us, our beliefs, or is it actually coming from the events that we say it's coming from? So we look at our own relationships. When we're unhappy with someone we love, our tendency is to point and say: If you'd only change, I'd be happier. Well, of course -- no doubt. Because what we're really saying is if you change to suit my beliefs, we'd have no problem, because then my beliefs wouldn't be challenged. But see, I have a belief that when you do a certain thing, I should be unhappy about it. Now isn't it funny that if this were true, that it's the event, how come they don't agree? How come the wife says: "But you don't have to be unhappy about that when I do such and such." How come the husband says: "Yeah, well, you don't have to be unhappy when I do such and such." And we recognize it for the other person.

How many of will really admit, you know and agree to that other person really has to be unhappy with what we do? Because they love us, do they really have to be unhappy if we're in a bad mood? Do they have to be? Couldn't they understand? Do they have to be unhappy when we're this or when we're that? When we do this or that? Most of us will not grant them that. No, they don't have to be unhappy; they could be understanding. Do we ever ask ourselves this though: do we have to be unhappy? Usually we don't get any further than: "Do we --", and then we say: "Yeah! Of course I do!" But do we? I know we've lived with these beliefs for a long time and so they become kind of obvious, we think. And we think the reasoning behind them is all well thought out, but is it?

And so one of the most fantastic things we can do for ourselves, and it's really a fantastically joyous thing, is to take something that we're unhappy about -- it doesn't make any difference what it is. We don't like feeling unhappy, right, so take whatever it is that we're unhappy about -- and really go into it. Why am I unhappy about that? What's there about it? What am I getting from being unhappy? Do I really need to be? Why am I unhappy about it? And getting back to some kind of a basic belief, which may boil down to something like: I'm afraid that if I'm not unhappy about it, I'm in worse trouble. That if I'm not unhappy about it, I won't be motivated to do anything. If I'm not unhappy about it, I'm really not a good person.

And so many of us try to prove that we're good people by being unhappy. And unhappy people are unhappy people and they don't contribute much in the way of happiness to others. And we may build things; we may even build a hospital because we're terribly guilty or terribly unhappy. But how come nobody likes us? How come nobody seems really grateful for all these wonderful things that we do for other people? I was such a good person; we suffer so much. How come nobody appreciates our suffering? We've got to drum it into their heads: Look at me! Look at how much I've sacrificed to you. Look how much I've suffered for you. See how good I am! Love me. Love me for making you feel guilty. And we expect love when we give guilt. We place blame and we expect love in return. And it doesn't work and we're amazed. "Hmm, I'm such a good person." And we are good, but the thing is that we make ourselves miserable and no one else notices that we're good. One thing, you know, unhappy people just don't make your face light up. Unhappy people just don't seem to attract other people. So often in our striving to be good we think we have to be unhappy. No. Does that really have to be that way?

So what I'm hoping most to share with you is a question and that's the Option Method; it's a method of questioning. I am definitely not stating that we should

not be unhappy. But what I am saying is, don't we all want to be happier? And the question that I'm sharing is, is our unhappiness really necessary?

I'm not suggesting that we have to be happy with disaster. What I was suggesting is asking: Do we have to be as unhappy as we are with it? Do we have to be unhappy at all? There are many things, which we may or may not be happy with, which we may never be happy with, but need we be unhappy with it? And I don't know that we know yet unless we look, unless we ask. Not do I have to be happy, but do I have to be *unhappy*.

Do we need the unhappiness to motivate us to do something about anything? Can we go ahead and do something about it without destroying ourselves as well?

Unhappiness is a fantastic motivation. Fire at your backside is a fantastic motivation. But something beautiful in front of you also works very well, and it hurts much less. Because unhappiness does sometime work very well, the next time we want something done, we'll use it again and again and again. And unfortunately, we have a history of that. Wars must work; they must work for some people or nobody would bother. But could being attracted to a more desired state of the world better than hating the current state of the world?

## Questions for Reflection

What are some ways that other people consider you the cause of their unhappiness?

Do they *need* to be unhappy about what you have done, or the way you are?

Do you *need* to be unhappy that they are unhappy, and may be unhappy forever?

## **Meditation for the Week**

- Not being unhappy is not the same as being happy. There is also being neither happy nor unhappy about an event.