

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

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More on How Emotions Happen

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Bruce Di Marsico

The choice of emotions

With happiness or with beliefs about “should’s” and “shouldn’ts”, the person is never aware that there is a choice. People say that they don't *believe* they have a choice; that doesn't mean that they really don't.

If your behavior would be considered inappropriate, people will tell you, "Don't do that." Don't act that way, don't feel that way. What are you unhappy about? Why are you angry? You shouldn't be angry at me. They believe that *you* have a choice. You're always right when you're angry and nobody's ever right when they're angry at you. That's believing in choice of emotions.

Up till now, we've been talking about choice in terms of choosing to believe something is good or bad, and those are choices, and that's what determines the feelings. There is no difference between doing that and choosing the feelings directly. People feel the way they want to feel.

The bad feeling is not the physiological feeling, and the physiological feeling isn't making you feel bad. Your response is from judging something as bad, from believing something can cause you to be unhappy. In other words, when you're feeling irritated and angry, you first must have believed you were threatened.

If I believe something's threatening something that I want, I may do something about that. But if I believe something is threatening my happiness, I'll feel something about that.

For a person to feel irritated and angry, they have to feel that their happiness is being threatened. If you found yourself irritated and angry, you could look at “why do I believe that thing that is making me irritated and angry could make me unhappy?” You are not free because there's a threat of unhappiness hanging over you.

Look at the most slightly irritated person and the most wildly disturbed person. The threat of unhappiness is hanging over both them. If there are many, many reasons “if this happens, I’ll be unhappy”, and great certainty, that's a wildly unhappy person. The less certain the reasoning is, the less frightened the person is, the less unhappy.

“Something is bad” is the same as “can cause unhappiness.” “Very, very bad” means “can cause more and more unhappiness.” “Slightly bad” means “can cause less unhappiness.” “Partly bad” means mildly irritated. “Totally evil” equals being in hell equals insane equals totally unhappy. That's the same as crazy.

No one is actually unhappy

People don't really ever get unhappy. They just only believe they're going to, and that belief is what they feel, which we then commonly call unhappiness. When you talked about total unhappiness, you have to understand, we're just talking about a belief. The behavior is that we call the most extreme crazy behavior is often a person who believes that they're totally unhappy, thoroughly evil, and completely wrong. That's what you're going to see being acted out, but you're never going to really see any unhappiness, only the fear of it.

We commonly and practically refer to things and emotions as unhappy, and the feelings are real, but what they are believing doesn't have to be real. When someone is believing that something is very, very bad, they are unhappy, but “unhappy” is just shorthand for saying they believe something is bad. They're believing they're going to get unhappy, and that's what it feels like to believe you're going to get unhappy. Unhappiness doesn't really exist. People don't feel unhappy. What they feel is what it feels like to believe in unhappiness, what it's like to believe in “bad” or to believe in evil.

In summary, people have emotions about what they think they're going to feel in the future. Emotions now are about what you believe your future emotions will

be. So, what they feel is what they think they're going to feel, but it didn't even happen. This is what it's like to believe you're *going* to feel it. Some people say they feel the devil in them. They can feel the demon. I want you to hear unhappiness as something like this: when people say they feel unhappy, it's like saying they feel the devil.

A person who thinks they're crazy is a little different. They believe they're feeling things they don't want to feel and doing things they don't want to do and having desires they don't want to have. They believe in craziness, and because they believe in craziness, they can find symptoms in themselves of craziness. But we only find symptoms of their believing in it. There's no such thing as a crazy person. A person with a religious background calls it feeling possessed. A person with a psychiatric background calls it feeling dissociated. The language is different but it's still saying that "I believe that I can be controlled by forces other than my own." It isn't possible.

The biggest mistake that anyone here could make is to believe that "Why are you unhappy?" means "Why the hell are you unhappy?" or somehow "You shouldn't be unhappy" or "There's no reason to be unhappy." To find out fundamentally, basically, what you're really unhappy about is sometimes to find out that you're not unhappy about anything. You can see yourself that what you're really afraid of, you don't even believe exists. You might propose, "I'm really unhappy. I'm really afraid that I will do such-and-such a thing", and you don't believe that at all about yourself.

I knew somebody who really did not want wealth, who said, "I do not want to be wealthy. I do not want to be rich." He said he hated the idea of being wealthy. I said, "Why?" "Because it makes you be an uncaring person, it makes you be a greedy person, it makes you be a whole bunch of unattractive things." I asked him, "Well, why do you believe that if you were wealthy, you would have to be those things if you didn't want to be?"

I didn't ask him that in order to make fun of what he believed. I just asked him why he believed it. Because there was nothing to the belief, when it came out in English as a real question, it just dissipated. He said, "I never asked myself that. I just always assumed." When you always assume something is true, you don't question. The whole value of questioning is to see if there's anything just being assumed, because where unhappiness is concerned, there must be an assumption that something is bad and that you're going to be unhappy.

There are lots of people in this world, everybody from the greatest scientists on down, who believe that there's always going to be some unhappiness in their life. Yet that belief is pure assumption and has nothing of truth in it. Your own unhappiness is a reason to question that. Why doesn't one question one's unhappiness even after the bitterness of it is known? Because another assumption is that it's good. Like any bitter medicine, you'll accept it as long as you believe it's good for you.

There are a couple of things that are conspiring and have been conspiring for millennia to keep people from questioning the whole assumption of unhappiness. Assuming there is unhappiness is an interesting play on words. Assumption means to take up; we talk about actors assuming roles, and if you assume unhappiness, you're taking it upon yourself. So there's a double meaning: Assuming unhappiness is like assuming a role. You've now assumed it, it's become part of you, it's you, and yet, assuming it also means it's never really you, but is only a role that you put on. It's an act that you perform by your own choice, and in that sense, it is you who is doing it, but the "unhappy you" is not you.

In other words, as an actor, I may be playing George Washington, but I am not George Washington. I am not portraying myself; I'm portraying somebody I believe is George Washington. So when you act unhappy, you portray someone else.

Being Happy Now

Questioner: How can I be instantly happy at all times?

You don't have to now start believing new things; you have to stop believing certain things. If you don't believe you're going to be unhappy, then what you are is happy.

But here is my answer: what makes you think you're not perfectly happy right now and for all times? If you believe it's not for all times, you have condemned yourself already. These are questions, not a statement. What makes you think there's a problem? Maybe, even, you were believing in unhappiness until I asked you, up till now. What makes you think there is still a question?

Who asks the question, "How can I start being instantly happy and never unhappy again?" Only somebody who believes that he's going to be unhappy in the future, which is why you're even asking the question.

Believing means "what you think is true." A belief is not something like you pick and choose from a smorgasbord. Believing something is true is what you think is true. Will you be getting unhappy in the future? Do you believe that is true?

Once you learn, though, that it's by believing it that you're burning yourself, I'm not so sure you're going to keep sticking your hand in the fire. But you have to see that that is what you are doing. You thought he was asking a question; I heard a person screaming, "I'm going to get unhappy in the future."

The question "How do I stop being unhappy?" comes from somebody who already believes in unhappiness. If somebody asked "How can I keep the devil away from me, now and the rest of my life?" You might say "The *what* away from you?"

You're free and you know it. Nothing is making you do anything, so the question

is, what makes you think you're not free? To start with, are you sure that what you're feeling is a bad feeling? What if I told you that what you were feeling was excitement for the future?

You're either free or not free. It is as if you are saying, "My knowing that I'm free isn't good enough," when it is perfectly good enough, and your freedom is doing its job perfectly well right now, but you just don't believe it and think there's a problem.

Enjoying Your Freedom

What does it mean to enjoy your freedom? It means to be conscious of it, to be aware of it, to make use of it. "Enjoy" is in many cases like "employ". How are you going to enjoy your new hammer? By finding something to hammer. How are you going to enjoy your new car? By going out for a ride. You enjoy something by using it, by employing it. That is what enjoying means.

So you're free, you just haven't enjoyed that you're free. If you believe you're in a cell, and the door is unlocked, but you believe it's locked, that doesn't mean you're not free. You're free, you just don't believe it. Now consider if the door is unlocked and now you know it's unlocked. Now you know that you're free. But if you stay in the cell, would you say that you're enjoying your freedom? Only if you knew that you were staying there by choice.

You can enjoy your freedom by reminding yourself, "I'm here because I choose to be. I'm doing *this* because I choose to. I'm doing *that* because I choose." And walking out of the cell from time to time would really be no different than walking back in or out or whatever because the enjoying is in the appreciating, the understanding and the realizing of your freedom and that you can count on it.

If you know something is true, you count on it. If your car has gas in it, you counted on that this morning. You go to all the trouble of getting dressed and

showering and going out to the car and starting it up because you are counting on the fact that you *are* going to be able to start it and take off and go where you want to go. You will do all kinds of things when you can count on something that you wouldn't have done otherwise. If you thought and you believed that your car would not start no matter what you did, you wouldn't have bothered getting dressed, you wouldn't have showered, you wouldn't have done all the things you were going to do in order to come here. You probably would have just picked up the phone and said, "By the way, I'm not coming today because my car won't start."

When you know that something is true, enjoying it is living and knowing and counting on the fact that it is true. For instance, when you know there's nothing to be afraid of, you can actually live as if there's nothing to be afraid of. If you know you're free, you will then live as if you knew you were free, because you *are* free. You will live counting on that. When you drive over a bridge, you're counting on the fact that it's going to stand up, and because of that, you're going to use that bridge—and that is not as dependable as your knowing you're free, which you can count on even more.

You can count on that how you feel is not one of the things that happened to you. So you can always count on feeling good. That would be called enjoying your freedom. If you are unhappy, you're not counting on feeling good. You're believing it's uncertain.

Somewhere along the line, you say, "Well, unhappiness is going to happen to me anyway, even if I do count on feeling good." "If I counted on feeling good, what good would that do me, because I could wind up not feeling good anyway." That's not called counting on feeling good. If you actually counted on feeling good, you would really be counting on feeling good.

What you've been doing all your life is counting on feeling good, but only for a

while, not forever. You go to a party, you're counting on feeling good for three hours, and tomorrow you are going to work, and are not counting on feeling good then.

Consider two people in an open jail cell. One says, "I can't leave," and you say, "But look – the door's open." "No, no, no, I can't leave. I can't leave." Is that person free? They're free, and they're liars. They're still free, they just don't believe they are -- they don't even believe their own eyes. My definition of a liar is somebody who doesn't believe their own eyes, and claims to not have the power to leave the cell, even though they know they do have the capability.

You can do anything you can do. Whatever it is you can do, you can do it. You're able to do whatever you're able to do. You're allowed to do whatever you can do. You're allowed to do what you're able to do. You're able to do what you're allowed to do. You can do what you can do.

You can also pay the consequences for what you do. And most of the times when people say they can't do something, they mean they don't want to pay the consequences, but that doesn't mean you can't do it. That just means you don't want to do it. The consequences is just the reason you don't want to do it. It's not true you can't jump off a bridge. You can, and don't want to, because you don't want the consequences. That's knowing your freedom.

When you start to feel good, you ask, "how can I keep feeling good?" And if you have used fear to get what you want, you have a paradox. Fear of not feeling good in the future is not going to work anyway to help you keep feeling good. Why worry about yourself if you start to feel really, really happy and you're appreciating it, reflecting on it and being aware of it, and then you got involved with something else or you weren't paying attention? That doesn't mean you're not happy. Someone could say, "Well, how do you feel now?" "Well, I don't know how I feel. Let me see." And you could start feeling happy again. So really, what

you call feeling happy is a kind of awareness.

Maybe the feeling high is a kind of an excited feeling and you had relaxed from it a bit, but there's nothing wrong. When you start letting off a little bit, then you worried, how can I keep it up? As if you should. Why should you? What's wrong with letting off a little bit? You're not going to unhappiness. You're experiencing happiness. Different physical feelings of it, that's all. Happiness is excitement but happiness is also peace. Happiness is knowing that you're happy. Not believing you're unhappy. Not believing there's a problem. Not believing that something that's happening is going to affect your happiness.

You're asking "how can I stop having problems", and you are having no problems.

There is nothing to believe

The student's approach is that what you have to do is learn something and remember something. The Option Method is learning how to forget something. It's a question of what you've been believing, not what we're going to replace that belief with. When a person stops believing in demons, do you replace that with a belief in something else? When you believed the devil existed, you believed it. But when you no longer believed it existed, you no longer believed it existed. So if you don't believe that what's going to happen to you on Monday, for instance, could make you unhappy, could make you not free, then you're just going to see things happening without judging them as reasons for unhappiness. Believe it or not, there is a point at which you can see somebody yelling and screaming and ranting and raving right at your face, and you just see it. It is just what's happening.

When you can start hearing unhappiness as meaning the same thing as "possessed by a demon", you can start seeing how ludicrous the whole thing is. When people say, "You shouldn't do that," you'll go, "Huh? Means nothing to me. I really don't

know what it means." You can realize how wise you are. You can appreciate it. "You ought to feel bad about that." "Aren't you ashamed?" These have no meaning. You wouldn't even know how to go about doing that thing that they're telling you to do. How could I go about feeling bad? How could I go about feeling ashamed? I don't have what it takes. I'd have to be believing something, wouldn't I? "You shouldn't have done that." "You should have done this." "That's not supposed to be." "That's wrong." You'll hear that as the same meaningless thing as if you hear someone saying to you, "That's a sin" or "That's evil". All of the expressions of unhappiness and the statements of unhappiness and the beliefs about unhappiness can become meaningless.

May I suggest to you that all the expressions of unhappiness are *already* meaningless to you, but you've been struggling with thinking that somehow you have got to have them have some kind of a meaning before you can dismiss them? When you were a kid, somebody told you that you were bad. You didn't know what that meant. "Huh? What?" You knew that somehow it meant something about them, that they're doing something to themselves, that they're thinking and saying and feeling something.

When someone didn't like you, you didn't what that meant about you. You heard about evil and bad and right and wrong, and you tried to give it meaning, and you wound up in this world of illusion. Your attempts to give it meaning is what we will call unhappiness. "Should" and "shouldn't", you've tried to give that meaning. They never did have meaning, if you think about it. You thought all your life you knew what "should" and "shouldn't" meant. In fact, all your lives, up until not too long ago, all you were concerned with is "what am I supposed to do? How am I supposed to be? What should I be? Should I go to this school? Should I go to that school? Should I take this job? Should I take that job? Who should be my friends? Should I be friends with her? Should I let them say this? Should I do that? Am I supposed to do this? Am I supposed to do that?" You tried to give those things meaning. You lived your life with it as if it had meaning.

These never had meaning. You were trying to give it meaning all the time, and that attempt to constantly give it meaning and live up to the meaning would be called stress, anxiety, and unhappiness. So we're going back to it having no meaning, where we came from. You'll then see the world for what it really is.

Some live their lives in order to go to heaven and avoid hell and things like that, but it all starts with the presumption that they're not in heaven now. My joke is, why isn't it entirely possible that you've died and gone to heaven, or, depending on your theology, you've been reincarnated into this perfect state now? The only thing is, you just don't believe it, that's all. You were born, you appeared on this heaven, this earth, and you're in heaven. There's nothing wrong. Everything's perfect. Have fun. And that's the way it is. And then you start saying, "But I can't do this, I can't do that, I can't say this, I can't do that. This can't be heaven."

Who said this wasn't heaven and paradise, and why did you believe them? Isn't it a fact that the only problem is that you believed them? If they're right, believe them. If they're not right, and you're not believing them, why are you here? You don't believe them. So what are you doing, asking me for permission to believe yourself? Well, you have an absolute right to do that but you might want to know that is what you're doing, if that is what you're doing: needing some authoritarian, bright guy to support your belief so that you can believe in yourself.

I see that with every client. They're always playing devil's advocate with themselves and with me. I'm there to try to help them to be happy and they're showing me how that isn't really possible because even if they do, they'll mess it up somehow. Whose side have you come to believe you're on?

Unhappiness is not a physical feeling

When someone has an emotion, I want you to see someone who's choosing how they feel, and then see that in yourself. If it's easier sometimes for you to see it in

others, don't deprive yourself of that. It's a perfectly good way of learning.

You'll notice that especially when people say, "I just can't help it, but I feel disgusted at this" or "I just can't help it, but I feel..." – you can at least know what you know, and that becomes a perfectly good time to remind yourself. It doesn't mean you're not willing to see it in yourself, but sometimes it's very obvious and very clear and very easy to see it in others. Then, at other times, it's much easier to see it in yourself and to use yourself as the example. It doesn't really matter which one as long as you do both.

See through when someone says "This makes me unhappy," "That makes me unhappy." See through "Knowing about this makes me unhappy, experiencing this makes me unhappy."

Distinguish the behavior from the feeling. Crying isn't a feeling. Screaming and yelling in anger is not the feeling. The physical feeling is almost not relevant to it. For instance, you wouldn't call that a feeling anger if it was there without the belief that something bad happened.

The belief causes the emotion, and that makes it seem like that emotion is the belief. So, in other words, if you have the feeling of anger, which is a feeling that you have in your chest or someone else has it in their throat or someone else has it in their stomach, why we all call that anger is because we're all believing this has got to stop.

This belief that this has got to stop, that is really the emotion. That's what really creates the illusion that these feelings are the ones of anger. Although it's true that the body responds to those beliefs, how and why it responds isn't a concern really because that's going to be different for each person.

When a person says they're feeling bad, the physical sensation isn't in itself the

feeling bad. If a person is experiencing shakiness which they are worried about, they could say, "God, I'm nervous," and feel very worried about that. Now, the shakiness might in fact be physiological to start and there'd be no emotion there as such. But their belief about it now is the emotion called worry.

Besides the fact that you have judged your physiological responses, how do you know you feel bad? Why you feel bad is beliefs about the future. How you feel bad is stimulus-organism-response. Now we're talking about "how do you know you feel bad? How does anyone know they feel bad?" We only have their word for it.

In itself, to not want something, or to want something different, doesn't have to be unhappy. If you're glad that you want something different, is that unhappiness? Just the act of wanting something different has nothing to do with anything in terms of emotions. That's just a decision of your desire. But if you're uncomfortable with your own desires, that can become an unhappy experience. If you don't feel that you have the right to want something different, then you could feel bad about wanting it different. If you feel the thing you're wanting different shouldn't be that way, if you have the belief that it shouldn't be that way, then that's unhappiness--but not just wanting it different.

Unhappiness is not really a feeling. We've learned to talk about it about the feeling, but the actual unhappiness is not a feeling, but an attitude. It's a judgment *about* that feeling, a judgment before that feeling, but it isn't the feeling.

Let's say you had a tumor on the brain and you went to a doctor and you got some treatment, and he says to you, "When this tumor starts to shrink, you'll get headaches. Every time, you'd be looking for the headache and be glad to have it. So how do you know an emotion is a bad emotion? It's not the tears that are unhappiness, or the screaming and yelling of anger. When you decide that something shouldn't be, that's the unhappiness.

If your heart is beating faster, some would call that fear and unhappiness. To me, that sounds like a person trying to run away from something and escape. That's the flight mechanism. If you were believing "I want to run away," you might organize your body in such a way that you would start to prepare for that. Is that a bad feeling? Or would you have to be feeling bad in the first place before you'd call it a bad feeling? Your heart beating fast in and of itself is not a bad feeling, but coupled with believing that something *shouldn't* be, or you *should* be getting away from it, or it *can't* happen, that is unhappiness.

Wanting to get away from something wouldn't be an unhappy feeling. Your question is, "I thought there were beliefs, then there were feelings, and the beliefs cause the unhappiness." But the part that is the unhappiness is not the feelings, it's the belief. If I gave you a pill that mimicked certain physiological feelings of unhappiness, that wouldn't mean you were unhappy, even though it made you feel the same way that you would have felt when you were unhappy

Getting unhappy about physical symptoms, or judging them as unhappy, often exaggerates the symptoms. Nervousness turns to frantic panic. Sadness turns to debilitating depression.

On the other hand, if you change the physiological feeling, you haven't changed the unhappiness. In other words, if you give a frightened person a tranquilizer, you haven't changed their belief. You've covered up the belief, in a sense, by not allowing it to have its normal expression. But they are still unhappy, they still have the same belief, they still believe that something is bad.

If your expression of unhappiness is tension, and now you no longer believe you have to do that, you may feel residual tension, just as if you've been exercising and you stop exercising. The physical tension may be lessening. Things are moving in ways that they didn't move before. And you can either know that you are now not

unhappy, or be unhappy that your body has not fully moved to the state you expect it to be in.

To be meaningful as unhappiness, unhappiness has to be something you yourself would agree is unhappiness. When you see somebody shaking, it isn't long before somebody says to them, "You're nervous," and they learn the name for that. But without the name, the chances *may* be that there's a similar belief involved, but we don't know. It may be true that we express that we're unhappy somatically, but even if we couldn't, we'd still be unhappy; if you have a schizophrenic who's flailing and throwing himself against the wall and you put a helmet and a straightjacket on him, you don't believe you've really done anything for his emotions, yet the expression is not there any longer. Or if you internally straightjacket them with drugs, we agree, too, that that hasn't really changed their belief. If they still think their mother is evil, they're still going to believe their mother is evil. Though, altogether, they may actually not feel as bad because they may no longer be feeling bad about the symptom.

A person that's unhappy about having certain physiological feelings, if you cure those feelings, they're not going to be unhappy about that. If a person's unhappy about being poor, and you give them money, they won't be unhappy about being poor. You've done them a great favor, but you haven't really dealt with the issue of why and how they got unhappy. That's changing the event, and that's what people have thought they needed to do: get the power to change the event in order to stop feeling unhappy, and have constant power and constantly increasing power to do so. The thing is, that doesn't stop people from then being unhappy about the next thing they think they ought to be unhappy about.