

The
OPTION METHOD

The Myth of Unhappiness

*The Collected Works of Bruce Di Marsico
on The Option Method and Attitude*



Feelings, Beliefs, and Desires * Emotions * Motivation *
Wanting, Doing, and Knowing * Relationships * Believing
Yourself * Forms of Unhappiness * Arguments against
Happiness

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on
The Option Method and Attitude



Edited and with commentary by Aryeh Nielsen

Foreword by Frank Mosca

Introduction by Deborah Mendel

With contributions by Wendy Dolber

The Option Method: The Myth of Unhappiness
The Collected Works of Bruce Di Marsico on The Option Method and Attitude
Volume 2

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Dialogues in Self Discovery LLC
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Design by Williams Writing, Editing & Design
www.williamswriting.com

Volume 1

Paperback, ISBN 978-1-934450-01-7

Volume 2

Paperback, ISBN 978-1-934450-02-4

Volume 3

Paperback, ISBN 978-1-934450-03-1

Printed in the United States of America

*Listen to your heart,
for that is where knowledge acts.
Do only what attracts you.
Do what you feel like.
Cor Super Ratio. The Heart above logic.*

—Bruce Di Marsico

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Foreword by Frank Mosca

THE READER OF THESE WORKS IS GOING TO FIND A ROADMAP TO THE vast and varied workings of Bruce Di Marsico's mind. But despite the sometime appearances of complexity, there will be a road sign pointing always, always in one direction: to your happiness. That is the key to remember as you set out on your journey. I know that this is what has sustained and enriched my own journey, one that began decades ago when I was fortunate to come upon Bruce's ideas and then had the great fortune to meet and learn personally from him. This brief introduction is really simply one person's experience of Bruce, of The Option Method and what that has meant in my life.

First at the core, it has meant everything. It has meant ongoing happiness to the degree that I learned to remember my happiness should I forget it. It has meant the disentangling of what seemed to be impossible knots of contradictions, complexities and conundrums that seemed never to yield to whatever I would bring to bear to try and help myself. The image of Bruce like Alexander cutting the Gordian knot of human misery comes to mind. But it was not an act of hubris, but one of immense insight that allowed him to see through the apparent insurmountability of the problem of human happiness. He could then dissolve what stood in the way and open to view that most profound but simple truth: your happiness is always yours; it is in fact what and who you are. Beliefs are the artificial blockages to that direct and incredible knowledge. Questions are the key to removing them.

Like Socrates, from whom he drew some inspiration, Bruce relished the dialogue and the coming to the key "I don't know" moment. The moment when we stand on the edge of two worlds. The one we could now leave behind. The one we have constructed with the aid of culture in all its forms and configurations. Once the veil

of our dedication to the pseudo-certainty of what we think we know is rent, we are naked to the possibility of taking that giant step to acknowledging the unshakeable truth of our own happiness now and in every moment we are privileged to allow ourselves to know it.

As you read these volumes it will at times seem that Bruce may be going off in endless tangents of discussions. But these are not tangents at all. Remember, that one blinding truth about happiness is resisted by us in almost endless ways. His students and clients raised doubts and difficulties at every turn as they wrestled with the import of surrendering their beliefs in some apparently necessary miseries, some absolutely irreducible requirements to be unhappy. Remember, our whole world rests upon these assumptions. It is no wonder then that Bruce brought his particular eloquence to elaborate and draw out incredible subtleties of argument, wit, and pure intellectual power to counter these objections and to continue thereby to hold out hope to those who continued to bury themselves in needless labyrinths of their own making. But he was patient; it was his signature strength. He knew what seemed to us to be at stake, and he wanted for all who would to hear that joy that he himself was living.

So, don't hold back in your engagement with Bruce; he will not disappoint you. In all these decades, he has been my constant companion in life and even in death. His words, his vision, his immense verve in being willing to take on your fears and doubts with extraordinary intellectual skill will get you to that place you yearn for. So it has been with me, through so many unexpected turns and twists my life has taken.

Now in my seventies, I am filled with joy at the prospect of his work being made widely available. He has shone a bright, inextinguishable light into the shadows and darkness of the human condition. Do not fear it. It will not consume but will enlighten and elevate. I am so glad you are taking this opportunity to discover this for yourself. Written with deep gratitude,

Frank Mosca
May 5th, 2010
Hampton Bays, New York

Guide to the Collected Works

The Collected Works of Bruce Di Marsico SPAN THREE VOLUMES, which together constitute his explanation of the truth about happiness: that we are already perfectly happy, and unhappiness is merely the belief that we could somehow not be.

These writings are created from lectures and writings created over a period of a quarter century. Bruce taught a number of extended courses on Option, and this book attempts to follow the general order of presentation in his teaching work, and to serve as a course in The Option Method and Attitude for those who were not able to experience Bruce firsthand.

The course progresses in this manner: first, an introductory overview is presented (*Overview of The Option Method*). This is followed by core Option concepts (*Happiness, Unhappiness, Feelings, Beliefs, Desires, Emotions, Motivation, Wanting, Doing, Knowing*).

Next are the most immediate, everyday implications of these teachings (*Relationships, Believing Yourself, Forms of Unhappiness*), more advanced implications (*Arguments against Happiness, Behavior, Myths*), and then the most esoteric implications of Option (*Happiness without Reason, Enjoying Your Happiness, Option Mysticism*).

Only at this point is *Practicing The Option Method* considered. The Option Attitude is the foundation of The Option Method. Just as “technically correct” music empty of emotion is an empty exercise, so is The Option Method practiced without the Option Attitude. Bruce did not cover the practice of The Option Method until well into his courses, so that the fundamental Option Attitude was well-established in those who used the Method. He demonstrated and taught that once the Option attitude is well-understood, the practice of the Method flows organically.

Finally, *Stories and Meditations* and *A Comprehensive Overview* provide a summing up and review of Option teachings.

The material, while presenting an overall arc of argument, has many loopbacks and repetitions. Bruce often said the same thing in many different ways so that everyone would have a chance to understand the implications of knowing that unhappiness cannot happen to us.

The truth of happiness is simple. Why does it take three volumes to explain? Because the belief in unhappiness takes many forms, and is incredibly complex. But to be happy, there is nothing to know. All the medicine contained within these volumes is to help release unhappy beliefs, and as they fall away, they become of no importance. After studying the *Collected Works*, you will know far less than you did when you started. What you will no longer “know” and believe is that you have to be unhappy. And you will find that, without these beliefs, you will know your own happiness.

The three volumes of *The Collected Works of Bruce Di Marsico*

Volume I

An Overview of The Option Method
Happiness
Unhappiness

The first part of Volume I provides an overview of The Option Method, and touches on all aspects of Option, to provide a framework for understanding the details. The remainder of this volume explains happiness and unhappiness: happiness is what you are. Unhappiness is believing that what you are is somehow wrong.

Volume II

Feelings, Beliefs, and Desires
Emotions
Motivation
Wanting, Doing, and Knowing

Relationships
Believing Yourself
Forms of Unhappiness
Arguments against Happiness

Volume II starts by explaining how unhappiness happens. Believing, or predicting the consequences of an event for how you feel, is how emotions happen. Why does unhappiness happen? It is the (unnecessary) use of emotions to motivate your wanting. It also discusses happiness in the context of relationships, how happiness is synonymous with perfect self-trust, and the forms that unhappiness takes. It concludes by dismantling arguments commonly made against happiness.

Volume III
Behavior
Myths
Happiness without Reason
Enjoying Your Happiness
Option Mysticism
Practicing The Option Method
Stories and Meditations
A Comprehensive Overview

Volume III addresses myths: the myths that behavior has anything to do with happiness, and myths such as “the meaning of life.” It continues with discussing how we need no reasons to be happy, and then discusses enjoying your happiness, as you get more and more in touch with it (perhaps ultimately manifested as a form of mysticism). It explains how to practice The Option Method to help you or others get more in touch with their happiness. It concludes contemplations on happiness in the form of stories and meditations, and two summaries of Option teachings, one comprehensive and one reductive.

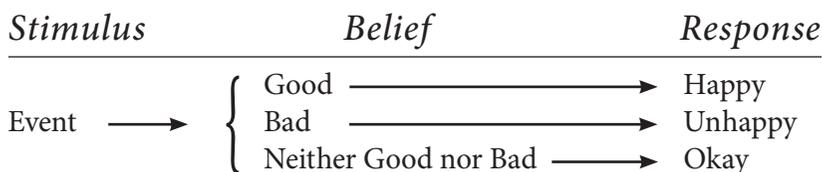
How Unhappiness Happens

November 11, 1995

ALL people in all societies—all people in all societies and anyone that I knew of, and certainly anyone you’ve ever known—have always believed it was necessary to be unhappy in some way, even the most brilliant among us: Buddha, Jesus, Freud, all have believed it was necessary to be unhappy.

What was questioned was, what was the right thing to be unhappy about? What’s the wrong thing to be unhappy about? How much should you be unhappy about it?

The Option Method has shown us that people are unhappy to the degree to which they believe they need to be unhappy. For instance, if they believe that there’s something to be very unhappy about, they’ll be very unhappy about it. If they believe it’s something to be only slightly unhappy about, they’ll be slightly unhappy about it.



This diagram shows how human emotions are created. Maybe you’ve heard that they were created by choice, or maybe you’ve always believed that they just happened to you.

This is how human emotions are really created: there is an event (stimulus). There’s the organism which experiences the stimulus—in this case, a human being. After the event happens, the human being judges them as good, bad or neither good nor bad, and all human emotions are based on that.

If you believe an event is good, you feel happy or as we often say, feel good. If you believe an event is bad, you feel bad or unhappy. And if you feel it's neither good nor bad, you feel neither.

A human emotion does not exist separate from the judgment, and the event can even be illusory. It could be mythical. It could be a dream. It doesn't even have to be real, but if you feel you need to judge it in any one of those three ways you're going to get any one of those three results.

Even if you find out later that the event was only a bad dream, while you believed that dream was bad, you felt bad. When you learned it was a dream you then decided it was a nothing.

The whole point of The Option Method is to help people see that their emotions don't just happen to them. That's the only thing that it's meant to show. It can be used to help people be happy, but that isn't its goal.

The goal of The Option Method is just simply to show people that they are not wandering souls being abused by the universe. That they just get unhappy about this and about that, unhappy about China and unhappy about taxes and unhappy about their boyfriend or girlfriend.

It is to explain why they have the kind of emotions that they have and that they're not victims—that these unhappy emotions don't just happen to them. They are definitely a product of a judgment, without exception.

If there is something that looks like unhappiness, but it's not a result of a judgment, then it's not unhappiness. Then you ate something bad or something like that. But if it's not a result of a judgment, it's not an emotion.

If it's a feeling in your body, it's a feeling in your body. There are all kinds of feelings in your body. The only reason unhappiness produces something called a bad emotion is because you wouldn't be satisfied if you didn't identify that emotion as a bad feeling.

In other words, after you judged something as bad and you didn't get a knot in your stomach, what good is your judgment? So if you don't get a knot in your stomach and you don't get a lump in your throat or you don't get a headache or you don't get tightness, you wouldn't call it unhappiness.

It has to be believable to you. Believing is everything. So for it to be unhappy it has to be believable. Once you realize that, you can realize that even so-called bad feelings are merely feelings that you use in your own body. You created them in your own body and they're your own feelings and you did them to yourself, and they are not inherently any problem.

Once you see you do them to yourself, then you can do one of two things. "I created this in order to experience feeling bad and I'm not into that" and decide that you know better; or you could say, "Hmm, I only do this if I believe I'm feeling bad about something, so I can look at that and see if I am feeling bad about it or not and be done with the feeling bad or not."

But in either case what happens is that most people are afraid of what they went and made themselves feel. For example, I'm a child and I decide that something that happened is something I don't want. I've seen models of how people react to crying and I've seen what it's like when my mommy's upset and my daddy's upset or something and I know certain kinds of vocabulary of unhappiness. My point of view is that I can't be happy without this or without that or without the other thing.

I've rarely met a child who was worried about the starvation in China. It's usually more to do with their diaper or their own toys or something like that. It's usually very egocentric to start, because it wouldn't make any sense otherwise.

You can't go from worrying about your diaper to worrying about the world without something like that to use as a model.

So if you're creating the illusion of unhappiness, or the make-believe of unhappiness, or acting out unhappiness, all it takes is that you get good at it. You get good at feeling bad when you don't get what you want and you just simply get so good at it you're no longer talking about the learning process that was involved.

Any unhappiness is learned. In one way or another you've learned, before you ever heard there was a choice, that there are things to be unhappy about and you learned to be unhappy about them.

Actually you learned the kind of symptoms—you have symptoms that only Americans have; those of you who are American-born.

There are symptoms of other cultures that you would never conceive of. We culturally learn to be unhappy and then we learn *how* to be unhappy. Then there are subcultures. There's your region where you live. There's your family heritage. There's the way on your block and in your school. There's the way your friends do it. There's the way your family does it. The things they get unhappy about.

Then there's certainly aspiration to sophistication. So you start getting unhappy about the same thing as the *New York Times'* critics get unhappy about and things like that.

The smarter you get, the finer you hone it. By the time you've got your master's or Ph.D. you should be able to be unhappy about anything in the world—even a Rembrandt, because it's cool or it's smart to be unhappy about that.

There are lots of myths that perpetuate unhappiness; that it's good for you, that it helps you, that it makes you stay on your toes, that it keeps you in touch with reality, and so on. We'll talk about how those things are mythical later, but unhappiness is still constantly being supported by those beliefs.

The Option Method starts with that realization that these *are* beliefs: the belief that something is good, the belief that something is bad. I call it a judgment because it affects our emotions.

If it doesn't affect your emotions, for instance, if you believe a knife is good for cutting there is no reason to feel anything about that. That's not an emotional judgment. That's meant to be a factual judgment and insofar as you make factual judgments you don't have emotions, except if you're glad that you have a sharp knife to cut with.

But to say knives are evil or guns are evil is like saying, "you mean a knife that my surgeon uses is evil? The scalpel that he uses to save lives is evil?" No. Calling things bad and evil tends to be a moral judgment; overall judgments that just mean they're bad if they exist.

Believing that Unhappiness Is Necessary to Motivate Ourselves

WE want our wanting to be clear, with no alternative choices, conflicts or temptations.

The way we make it clearer is by increasing fear. Why do we ever begin that? Where did it ever start? Why do we use unhappiness at all? Why do we use unhappiness in any particular incident? Because we believe in it.

Why do we keep being afraid we won't have enough motivation? Because we've given up in the past. It's a cycle. I've proven to myself that I don't have motivation because I've made things very painful, and then stopped because it was so painful. For example, I wanted to be closer to you, and I made that painful, so I gave up on you and went to somebody else. That was my proof to myself that I do give up on what I want.

If events change and what we are doing becomes not worth it, that's fine. But usually events don't change; *we* start changing: We become more unhappy about the traffic, and now it becomes less and less worth it to go to work—but maybe the traffic didn't get worse, it might even have gotten better.

It wasn't that we just simply decided it wasn't worth it. It was because we've been giving ourselves fear and we sold out. It was not that it *really* wasn't worth it, it is just that I made it so painful that it became not worth it. So I'll start the same thing all over again with somebody else or in another circumstance because I know that I'm the villain in this. If it *really* was not worth it I wouldn't keep doing that sort of thing.

It is fear of being distracted from what you really want more; and in the example that I gave, the fear was that I'll be distracted from wanting your approval into wanting to be honest, when what I want even more is your approval.

This is all under the heading of “motivating myself to continue wanting.” I become afraid that I will want less rather than more. A

corollary fear to this is that somehow I won't know what is more important, all based on fear that I won't continue wanting what is more important.

When you think you're not going to do what you want to do, you call it evil, or unhappiness. You're using the whole belief in unhappiness to motivate yourself, which is based on a lack of self-confidence. The fact that you would dare to think that you might not do what you want to do, you're using that to make sure that you keep wanting to do it. You're giving yourself an extra motivation that you don't need, but you don't know that because you believe you'll give up.

Fear of Making the Wrong Decision

The corollary fear is that I somehow won't know what is more important. "Important" is that which will lead to getting more, that which will be a better preparation for our future life. And therefore, I'm afraid that I will choose the less important thing, the "wrong" thing, and I use this fear to ensure that I keep wanting the "better" thing. And it is not as important that I get what is better in this case, but that if I don't get it, at least it is not a result of my not wanting it. If I don't know the best thing to want at a given moment—in other words, the way of getting more, ultimately—then what becomes the most important thing is that at least I keep wanting to know what are the best things to want, so that if I can't know right now what the best things are to want at least I must keep alive the desire to know what the best things are, because otherwise without that, I'll *never* know what the best things are.

This is the fear of making the wrong decision. I become afraid that even if I knew what the better choice was I wouldn't choose it, that I wouldn't do what is more important.

I don't know what will lead to more. I don't know what's the best thing to want. I just don't know the future. I don't know with the facts that I have got which will lead to *more* for me, what choice would be the better prerequisite preparation for my happiness. Since I don't know, I become unhappy in order to decide. I fear that in the future I may believe that the other choice, whichever one I didn't choose, would have led to getting me more happiness, and I'm afraid that I might regret my choice. I use the fear to help me. I'm afraid that in the future I'll say, "I should have known better."

In order to reassure myself that I really want whatever is *more*, I

must rack my brain and become afraid so that I will be able to say, “I couldn’t have known better, I did the best I could have possibly done at the time.” I want to assure myself that I don’t want to be self-defeating. In case the future comes and it turns out that the other choice would have been the better choice, I want to be able to say, “It wasn’t because I screwed myself.”

So I use fear of not knowing what is more important to *decide* what is more important, to assure myself that I don’t want to be self-defeating, and that I take my wanting *more* very seriously. I am afraid that I only made the wrong decision because I really didn’t *want* to know what the better thing was for me. I’m afraid of seeing that I’m really a self-defeating son-of-a-bitch.

Having Reasons to Be Unhappy

I’ll believe there must be a reason why I’m unhappy, because I will always want more, and if there is no reason to be unhappy, if I don’t conjure up a reason, then there seems to be no way to make certain that I keep wanting more. That’s why everybody’s got a reason why they’re unhappy—but it is all bull. When I am conducting a session, I allow for each person’s integrity and never push them, and everybody’s got their own reason. The ultimate reason is that, even if there wasn’t a reason they want there to be one. And many, many times, always in my practice we’ve come down to: “I don’t know, I don’t have the reason, but there must be one. There is no reason to be unhappy about this, but I’m unhappy about this”—coming up with a good reason that is never really a good reason when they explore it.

Always looking for a reason to be unhappy, always wanting to believe that there’s a reason to be unhappy. That way I can reassure myself that I want better, because I’m afraid that I won’t keep wanting what is better unless I fear.

The two important things that we want in general: the most important is that at least I assure myself *that* I want. Secondly, my unhappiness at least keeps my wanting alive. Then if I keep my wanting alive, at least then maybe I can know what I want. This is more important than, for instance, a particular thing. A particular thing would be to want a cigarette, to want a drink, to want to walk, to want clothing, to want anything in particular. I’ll give up any of those, in fact. I’ll screw myself left and right. I’ll give up everything. I’ll even give up life as long as I keep on wanting—I won’t give up wanting.

Unhappiness Is a Motivator for Achieving Happiness

I want what I want and I want to keep my wanting alive. It becomes obvious in many cases that this is so painful when there is a deep depression, where a person just doesn't want anything. They're scared to death of wanting, because what they want so much, and what we all want so much, is happiness. Ultimately, unhappiness is a motivator toward achieving happiness. What's beyond all these wantings is the wanting of happiness, and that really can conflict with wanting when you're using unhappiness as a motivator for achieving happiness.

I gave you a model of all the various ways how we use unhappiness to motivate ourselves and others. We use it to motivate ourselves to either get what we want or at least to keep the wanting alive. In my continuing to keep wanting alive, the most important thing is that I keep wanting, so what I'll use will be the fear of giving up wanting. Another way of keeping my wanting alive is to keep the importance of the desired thing in my mind, to decide that that thing I want is important. I create that by one of two ways: by comparative consistency or by prerequisite preparation.

Happy people do that too; but this is the way, in unhappiness, we pervert these against us. Certainly, in happiness we can invert things: good is not losing a little, better is to not lose more.

So now make this become real for you. Pick anything, anything that anybody might be unhappy about, and I mean anything. Find out how it is used as a motivator. If you do that right now you'll find out that you're practicing The Option Method. You will all be inventing The Option Method right now for yourself without ever having been told what it is all about. If you just try to find out how unhappiness is used as a motivator—pick any unhappiness, try to find out how it is used as a motivator—you will be creating The Option Method.

Say to yourself, "How do I use unhappiness to motivate myself?" And you say, "Here's an example" and you give an example. And get really deep into that experience.

The idea is, "I use unhappiness to motivate myself."

"Oh, really? How? How am I using it now?"

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