

The
OPTION METHOD

The Myth of Unhappiness

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



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

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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 3

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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.

Myths and Habits

1975

SOME of our beliefs (predictions) have no current rationale. Unhappiness is *not* a habit but a new response each time to a new situation (although the mind may perceive it as similar experience or situation, it is still new in *this* time frame).

Many beliefs and behaviors are mythical in the sense that they may have once served a purpose or had a reason (for believing or behaving in a particular way) and that reason is no longer relevant, but the belief is still operative because it has not been questioned and is still believed to be existing for some good reason—which, in fact, may no longer be convincing, relevant, or in any way attractive and believable. For example:

- * finishing everything on your plate;
- * thinking it's bad to undress in front of someone (being embarrassed, still, with doctors and nurses, say);
- * feeling bad if someone disapproves of your behavior; and
- * requiring parents' permission to go out at night.

There are also general mythical fears in every culture. For example: the fear of growing older because I will not have the energy to do the things I want to do. (Older people do not want to go to the playground and run around the climbing bars, and need not be sad about leaving those desires behind. If an older person is unhappy about being old, that is a mask of blame to cover some other feelings and fears of not being able to be happy.)

My past has as little to do with me (i.e., my freedom to choose my beliefs) as *your* past has to do with me. Past attitudes cannot continue, they must be recreated (remembered and reaffirmed anew each time it is relevant).

Habits (beliefs that are believed, because they were re-believed or once believed, and we don't believe anymore) still exist *only* because we believe they do or have to. "I will have trouble or difficulty stopping (believing, doing, etc.) because I have not stopped for a long time. So it must be hard. I have tried in the past." Yes, you have tried while believing it was difficult. And your beliefs always win.

The Purpose of the World Is Your Happiness

December 12, 1992

It's good to realize that you're egocentric. It's just a way of describing self. You can only know yourself from yourself. You can only be motivated from yourself. It's only yourself that you can ever experience as yourself. And you move from there. Everything you perceive you perceive from there. Everything you bring in, you bring in to there. And it doesn't matter if there was ever such a thing as selfish or not selfish. It's as good a word as any; it just comes from what your self is. And it really is all you know.

Let me put it this way . . . there are some obvious kinds of truths that you know that you may not have related to or called upon just yet. There is no past universe. There is no past world. Simply put, all that ever was (the past), is gone, or is part of now, as now (it's not the past). All that ever was, was part of creating now, so all that ever was, is gone. All that preceded now was part of creating now. Given that, I want to ask you, why does the world exist now? Why is there a now? For what purpose?

Since there is no "why" apart from what happens, or I make happen, the question is really a form of "What will I do with the world and the universe?" See, when I am asking you "Why does the world exist?" it really means, "What will you do with this world? What will you do with the universe? What's the world supposed to be for?" or "What's the purpose of life?" or "What am I supposed to do?" or "Why should I want to live?" These are all related questions. What's the answer? Whatever *you* say.

But . . . that isn't the answer. Whatever you say is not *the* answer because I have *my* answer. So you can say that whatever I say is not the answer, it's what *you're* saying. *If* you say that—if you are still one of the people who say, "What's the world for?"—then I'll tell you: for *me* to be happy.

The whole world that ever existed, all the world that ever existed, the universe that ever was and has been, has conspired to bring me to this moment, so that I can be here to be happy. Everything had to be what it was in order for me to be here now to be happy. That's what I say. And if you say that, then that's what you say. If you say the world is for some other purpose better than yours, what kind of schmuck are you? Why should you be the one to volunteer to back off and say "The world is for some other purpose than mine?" You don't have to do that.

You know what you want. You want to be happy. You want happiness. And you want to exist to be happy. Or you know something, and you know then what I know, that it is your happiness, doing what's going on. Your happiness is what's going on.

Too mystical? Fine. Let's deal with the facts. What's the world for as far as you are concerned? What is the purpose for your life, if it isn't for you to know that you want to be happy? You want to be fertilizer? Somewhere down the line that's what *we'll* say. The purpose of your life is to add a little more fertilizer. Because that's what we saw happening.

The point is, you're not going to leave it for *us* to say what your life is for. You can; you can join a religion and have them define what your life is for. You can act like you don't know what your life is for.

You want to be part of humanity as you know it. You want to be normal. And you spent your whole life trying to be that. That's exactly why you get unhappy and not happy, and why you could get unhappy. You created yourself through this effort of constantly wanting to be something you call "good" or "normal."

How to Do The Option Method

1993

The First Question: “What are you unhappy about?”

Why would you ask this question?

This primary question, of course assumes that the person being asked may be unhappy about something. In practice it is usually only asked of a person who has first specifically complained of feeling bad. It might be considered intrusive if it were not for the fact that the client has come to see you with the understanding that you try to help unhappy people with their unhappiness.

In order to not make unwarranted assumptions, and to start off on the right foot, which is to speak to a person where he/she is right now, you might initially ask, “Would you tell me in your own words why you are here?” or “How may I help you?”

Alternatively, you might introduce yourself by telling the prospective client what it is that you do. By making it clear that your only function is to deal with his or her unhappiness, it allows the client to decide whether he/she will tell you that he/she is indeed worried, bothered or otherwise unhappy and wants help. After telling him/her what you do, you then might ask, “Is there something you’re unhappy about that you would like me to help you with?” or some such.

What are you unhappy about? (*Identify the complaint.*)

This question seems forthright and simple enough, but certain conditions apply to the proper use of it.

1. “Unhappy” means anything that the person might indicate as feeling in a way they don’t like. It is merely a model word. Any description that the client uses is usually the best word to use. For example: worried, annoyed, feel bad, bothered, angry, etc.
2. “About” is not as simple as it seems. What a person claims they are unhappy about does not mean they are actually unhappy about it. For example, they may just use another word for a kind of unhappiness: “I feel bad that I get nervous when I meet new

people.” Before you go on to the second Option Method question you would clarify this answer. You will now use the word “nervous” as the unhappy word.

What do you mean? (*Clarify the complaint.*)

This question, or a version of it; such as, “What do you mean by ‘he is unfair to you?’” This is a way to ascertain more precisely what the person is actually believing he/she is feeling bad about.

What about that are you unhappy about? (*Further Identify.*)

This question can have many forms, some more useful or pertinent than others. One is “What about that are you most bothered (worried, frightened, angry, sad) about?” Another might be “If that were to happen, what would you be most afraid of?” or “If that were to happen, what would be the worst thing about it?”

Your main emphasis is to keep the focus on the unhappiness of the person, not on anecdotes or the history of details that are irrelevant to what he/she is unhappy about.

“Unhappy” means any bad feeling. Use his or her own vocabulary. Vulgarities and Anglo-Saxon are, in fact, desirable when used first by the client.

This process of *further identifying* the unhappiness is, of course, used in conjunction with *further clarifying* when necessary. Whenever you don’t understand anything relevant to the person’s unhappiness, it is usually an essential part of the Method to ask for clarification. For a simple and honest approach to helping someone, you will rarely ever hesitate or shirk from asking “Could you explain that?” or “Excuse me. Could you tell what you mean by that?”

On the other hand, it is not *further identifying* nor *further clarifying* to be curious or nosy. Never ask for personal or for selfish information. The important reason for this is not especially out of respect for decorum, but most relevantly to not distract from the subject at hand, the important and personal unhappiness of the client.

The Second Question: “Why are you unhappy about that?” (*Identify the belief or reason.*)

This question really means, “Why do you believe that you have to (must) be unhappy about that?”

This is part of the Method that begins the enlightening, and is re-

ally a teaching and revealing of an Option truth about unhappiness. It presupposes that each person has a reason and is not an unwilling recipient of “natural or supernatural” unhappiness. This question is even more personal than the preceding ones. It asks the person to realize that he has his own very personal reason for being unhappy about whatever it is. The question can have many forms. The various ways of asking are meant to approach the most direct way of asking “Since you don’t want to be unhappy if it’s unnecessary, why do you believe that it is necessary in this case?” For example:

(Identify)

“What is your reason for feeling bad about not having a boyfriend?”

“Others will think I’m a loser.”

(Clarify)

“What do you mean by a loser?”

“Someone with no self-respect.”

(Further Clarify)

“What do you mean by no self-respect?”

“Someone who doesn’t care enough about herself to get and keep a boyfriend.”

(Further Identify)

“Why would you feel bad if others believed you had no self-respect, which means you don’t care enough about yourself to get a boyfriend?”

Why? means “For what reason of yours?” or “For what purpose of yours?” or “Of what is the value or use to you?”

“Because I do care, and don’t want to be seen as a loser.”

(Further Clarify)

“Even though you *don’t* want to be seen as a loser, why does that mean you have to be unhappy if they *do* see you that way?”

“Because I am a loser.”

(Clarify)

“What does loser mean in that case?”

“I’m a loser because they don’t like me.”

(Identify)

“So, are you saying you are unhappy because they don’t like you?”

Continue as above.

When you arrive at . . .

“Even though you can’t have what you want unless people help you have it or give it to you, why do you have to feel bad when you know you still want it, and don’t know how to get it?”

“What?”

Repeat the question. When you arrive at . . .

“I should have it,” or “I should know how,” or any version of should, must, ought to, etc., or a form of “Anyone would,” or “Wouldn’t you?” or “Everybody knows that,”

ask the most direct form of the why question, which is,

“Why do you believe that?” or “Yes, maybe I or anyone would be like that and we would have our reasons, but what is your reason?”

The answer is some version of “I must because my happiness depends on it,” or “If I don’t, I have to be unhappy.”

Now ask again.

“Why?” or “Why do you believe that?”

When you arrive at any answer which indicates that the client has no current real reason, such as “I don’t know,” or “I always have,” or “I just assumed it,” ask the *third question*.

Unhappy reasons to be questioned:

Should, Must, Need To, Have To, Ought To, It’s Natural

Helpful explanations or insights: “Not everyone would be unhappy about that. Why are you?” “Since you believe God wants you to be unhappy in order to really change, why can’t you change for God without being unhappy?” “Do you really believe that, or do you just think you should?”

The Third Question: “What would it mean if you were not unhappy about that?”

The purpose of this extraordinary question of The Option Method is to help a person see that he assumed that being unhappy was the only way of caring; really caring. In fact, this question and its answer disclose that people assume and are afraid that they are not on their own side, do not act in their own best interests, and are intrinsically motivated by unhappiness and undeserving of happiness when they find the unhappy evidence which they believe proves they are wrong or bad for themselves. The answers are usually a form of . . .

“It would mean I don’t care about myself,” or

“It would mean I don’t want what I want,” or

“I’d be crazy.”

This Third (Reverse) Question is meant to reveal what all people are basically afraid of: finding proof of being bad for their own happiness or self-interest.

Respond in some fashion with this summary, ultimate question:

“Why would it mean you were bad for yourself or your happiness if you were not unhappy?” or the longer version:

“Since you know that you want what you want, don’t want what you don’t want, care about what you care about, don’t care about what you don’t care about, approve of and/or don’t approve of what you choose, how or why does anything mean you are the opposite of what you choose and decide about you?”

The Frequent Interjection

“How do you feel?”

Throughout the use of The Option Method, it is useful and helpful to both you and the client to frequently reassess the mood of the client. Such questions as “How do you feel now?” or “Are you unhappy about *that* (the discussed unhappiness) at the moment?” will help to keep your questions relevant to the most current feelings of the client. What frequently begins as a questioning of one fear often becomes a reminder of another, more important (to the client’s) unhappiness.

When the person seems to be feeling better, double-check. When the unhappiness changes, start with “What?” again.

There is no greater kindness nor a more loving vocation than to question unhappiness!

Helpful Reminders and Affirmations

“How do you feel right now?”

“Of course you want that, but why are you feeling bad . . .?”

“Others have their reasons for feeling bad about that, but what is your reason?”

“Just a reminder! You would like to feel less unhappy, wouldn’t you?”

“Do you want to be unhappy about this?”

“Why does that mean you don’t want the best for yourself?”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“I am really just asking a question. There is no right answer, only yours.”

“Why does that mean you are unhappy?”

“If that symptom did not mean to you that you were unhappy, how would you feel about it?”

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