



THE SILVER LINING

How our thoughts can guide us to EXPERIENCE life in ALL of its beauty

Thunderstorms are inevitable. They are, in fact, a blessed part of our existence. When the dark clouds form and the lightening crashes, do we cower in a corner succumbing to feelings of fear or anxiety or rage, or do we see the beauty of the sun's rays that are shining through, offering us a moment in time to view these wonders of life as something more than a thunderous break from the comfortable light of our existence, but an opportunity to view the light that is surrounding these storms?



There is an opportunity for us in all situations to rise above all of what we perceive in them as good or bad, light or dark, a cloudy view or a clear sky, and be able to become the highest expression of ourselves in all of these moments -- embracing them all without judgment.

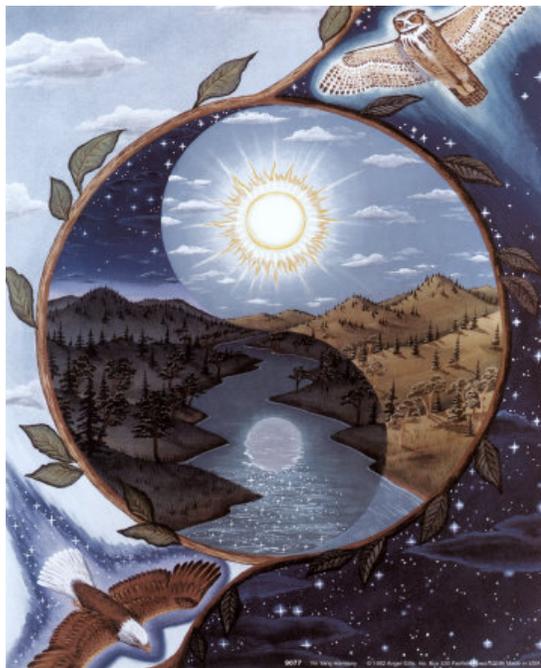
Some people refer to this skill as “seeing the silver lining.” Another way to look at it is through the serenity prayer which structures this concept by stating that we cannot change the experience (accepting what we cannot change), but we CAN change how we view the experience (changing the things we can)... and the wisdom to know the difference? –

That lies in the complete understanding of knowing the difference between WHAT we are experiencing and HOW we are choosing to THINK about that experience.

Is there a simple manual for how to express ourselves in this manner, how to reach this state of non-judgment, how to transcend the inevitable polarities of our existence, removing all boundaries, and viewing our life and its experiences without positional constraints? Is there a guidebook that will tell us how to rise above these judgments we create through our experiences to find a beauty in all of them. There may be no ONE clear or “right” path to accomplish this, however there are various ways we can each find to lead to this expression of ourselves. It is my hope that I might offer one vantage point that demonstrates this.

Sometimes the past experiences of our lives and our conditioning has made it so that we are consistently brought to the judgment factor of every new experience without hesitation. We’ve grown accustomed to dealing with life in this manner, and it has served its purpose for each of us in its own way. In actuality, each of these moments in time that we have cast a judgment upon a situation, we have thus allowed ourselves an opportunity (in a later time) to reflect upon that moment to view it as something MORE than what our conditioned response has told us to formulate. We can, then, redirect our thought process and restructure it to accommodate a new way of perceiving that situation. Did it really deserve my judgment of right or wrong, good or bad... was it really something to fear or rather something to embrace and grow from? Am I able to remove my judgments and see the experience for just what it is...an experience? And can I find that there is beauty in all of them? Can I search through these experiences to find the beauty and rise above any judgment I might have or any conditioned thought process I might still be holding on to?

YES!!!



“Yin Yang Harmony” By Rick Faist, 1992

“For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” ~William Shakespeare (from Hamlet)

The impact of this single expression is truly profound. What exactly is the message here?

Basically, the message says that an experience is nothing more than an experience until we have a thought about it, and then with that thought we have created a judgment about it.

We know that every experience we have causes us to *feel* a certain way. We tend to have a feeling and we are then asked by our brains to do something with that feeling. We are asked to PROCESS it in some way. Will we laugh, cry, scream, or go numb; will we speak out, remain silent, fight, or show love? HOW will we react and what actions might we take? Much of what we do with our emotions is due to our conditioned responses. Other emotional responses come naturally as we are allowing ourselves to TRULY FEEL an experience in time.

But there is something extremely crucial in the little moments *between* our experiences and our emotional *responses* to our experiences besides ALL of what we have felt.

1. We have an experience.
2. We *feel* something in regards to this experience.
3. We have THOUGHTS about what has happened.
4. We respond through our actions. (And sometimes this is a very emotional response!)

Now have you noticed what is happening in #3? We are having thoughts! And this is where the conditioning from our past can come into play, where our judgments about the situation can take form, and also where we have the opportunity to THINK before responding, before taking action! I *really* have had to THINK about this whole process that is taking place in some extremely emotional experiences I've had because...

Some experiences happen SO quickly that we are, quite frankly, very reactive to them.

It takes time and patience to come to a place where we are accustomed to dealing with these moments that come swirling through us like a tornado -- while still remembering to honor ourselves in each of them by recognizing our thought patterns long enough to respond in a way that transcends all judgment. Sometimes we have to reflect on a situation, go back to it, and restructure our thoughts so that we can allow ourselves this emotional freedom of non-judgment. Some experiences are so tremendously emotional that we feel like everything about that experience is nothing but emotion, and thoughts have no bearing on any of it. But, if only for an instant, those thoughts happen. We may cycle right back from RE-acting to feeling all over again; never-minding those thoughts . . . but they ARE there.



I cordially invite you to step into a world of experience with me and view these steps (mentioned above) that I had taken, one by one, as an example of this process. When you enter this world perhaps try asking yourself, what would *my* immediate response have been? How would *I* have felt in #2 (when we feel something)? What would *my* thoughts have been in #3 (when thoughts are formulated)? And, finally, how would *I* respond in #4 (when the moment arose for action)?

AND... would you involve yourself in any restructuring of the process along the way?

I believe this restructuring is vital in our ability to change and hold perspectives of experiences as we move through life because through each of these thought perspectives of our experiences we become inspired, motivated, and encouraged to take some kind of present day action. When I ask you to play with me here, I am certainly not asking you to share the same perspectives as me. I am only inviting you to play around with a scenario of this process I've mentioned, and in that playtime, perhaps find some interesting ways that a person might process an experience. What are the possibilities? Endless, I imagine!

#1 (experience): I was shopping for groceries and had my purse in the front of the buggy under my apples. I had a full cart and was so pleased that I was finally able to fill my pretty barren cabinets. I was nearly finished with my task, and even though I had been mindful of the entire shopping experience, I had turned my back on my cart, becoming UN-mindful of watching it. I was tallying up some numbers real quick, and when I looked back at my cart, my purse was gone!

#2 (feelings): I was scared, panicky, worried, and upset.

#3 (thoughts): Maybe I dropped my purse on another aisle. Maybe it's possible it just fell out of my buggy. I don't remember seeing anyone on this aisle with me, so there's just no way it could have been taken. But my back WAS turned . . .

#4 (actions): I went racing through the last few aisles to check.

#1 (experience): My purse was not on the aisles.

#2 (feelings): I felt even more scared, worried, and upset.

#3 (thoughts): The real possibility that it could have been stolen entered my mind. I started to place blame on myself for leaving my purse in the buggy and on whomever might have taken it, although NOTHING had been proven yet.

#4 (actions): I went to the customer service desk and asked them if anyone had found a purse. The reply was, "No." I explained that I thought it was stolen.

#2 (feelings): I became panicky and angry as realizations set in.

#3 (thoughts): My thoughts ran wildly through me: I realized I could not bring home food for my family that night, and what were we going to eat? -- I realized that my purse was gone, gone, gone as it was explained to me that the woman working self-checkout saw a man with the same purse as I described in HIS buggy, and he had no woman with him. -- I remembered my car keys AND my spare car key was in my purse. How was I to even move my vehicle? How was I to get home?

#4 (actions): I conveyed all of this to the personnel working, and as I did, TEARS streamed down my face, my BODY was shaking, and my BREATHING was labored.

I encountered more experiences as a result of this ONE. Through these additional experiences, my feelings and thoughts began to transform. These new thoughts actually transformed my reaction to the entire situation.

#1 (experience): A person I didn't know offered to the manager \$100 and their business card for me to be able to bring home food for my family. They did this without the expectation of ever hearing from me again.

#2 (feelings): I felt immediate gratitude and compassion and warmth.

#3 (thoughts): My thoughts TRANSFORMED from bitterness over the entire situation to thoughts of human kindness. Someone had stepped out of their world into mine and selflessly gave of themselves.

#4 (actions): I let these feelings fill my soul. I took their card and chose to believe they were a miracle (I later finished my shopping and returned their money the next day.)

#1 (experience): The woman in customer service offered her advice on how to immediately stop my bank card... she just happened to be a member of the same bank and knew the number I could call off the top of her head, and then she handed me the phone.

#2 (feelings): I felt enormous gratitude once again.

#3 (thoughts): I thought of the wonderful people that were stepping forward in my time of need and the BEAUTY in this situation and was believing that everything was miraculous in each moment.

#4 (actions): I let it fill my soul. I called the numbers for my bank and everything worked out.

#1 (experience): The woman in self-checkout offered a number of a lock service where her relative worked, and said she had already contacted them and that I could call them the next day with my VIN number to get new keys made for my car.

#2 (feelings): I was overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of others.

#3 (thoughts): I began to think about how I would have NEVER even have met all of these people who were offering assistance nor had the opportunity to view kindness from this vantage point (and these other people would not have had the opportunity to show their kindness from this vantage point either) if not for this situation!

#4 (actions): I offered HUGS in my gratefulness, WORDS of thanks, and my TEARS of distress had been transformed into TEARS of thankfulness. My BODY was stilled and my BREATHING had calmed. I was SEEING BEAUTY everywhere.



I felt blessed and saw beauty through this entire situation. I suppose there was the option for me to hold bitterness and anger, however I was able to guide my thoughts and feelings in a new direction in order to find something more in that experience. By stepping into this world with me, could you see the process of experience directly related to feeling and thought and action, and also interwoven many times over again?

There are numerous perspectives that could be formed from this experience. They are all valid as the possibilities ARE endless!!! It is up to us if we are satisfied with our outlook on life.

We have opportunities everyday to hold or change our perspectives in any given situation. Our experiences will always stay the same. It is our thoughts and our feelings and then the actions we take that we have the power to CHANGE!

In a far less serious context:

The ability to see beauty in all situations is sometimes a trying task. It is certainly an intentional way of being. Not all situations APPEAR beautiful. Life doesn't always seem to smell like roses or look like pretty daises. We can say, "Wow, look at how beautiful that sunset is." And from SO MANY people's perspectives they will see it the same. "Beautiful." But to take a pile of shit, for example, and be able to say, "This is fantastic!" is something else entirely. :-0 Not as many people are going to hold that same "fantastic" vantage point! Most will think, *all of my senses (smell, sight, touch, even taste –if I were to try it) make me think it is not fantastic.* It takes a little bit longer for our preconditioned thought processes to recognize the real beauty in that pile o' shit. Not everyone is willing to stick around long enough for their thoughts to be guided into that beauty. But look what might happen if they can allow some further thought into it. They might see that it just manifested an entire years worth of crop!!! And that tastes wonderful! Or that it just made their flowers vibrant!!! And they look and smell gorgeous! It IS fantastic! So yeah, piles of shit really can bring out the beauty in life! :-)



When we have an experience, feel something in regards to it, have thoughts about it, and thus react, we have the opportunity of allowing ourselves in every experience we have to react as the beauty and compassion that we find through them.

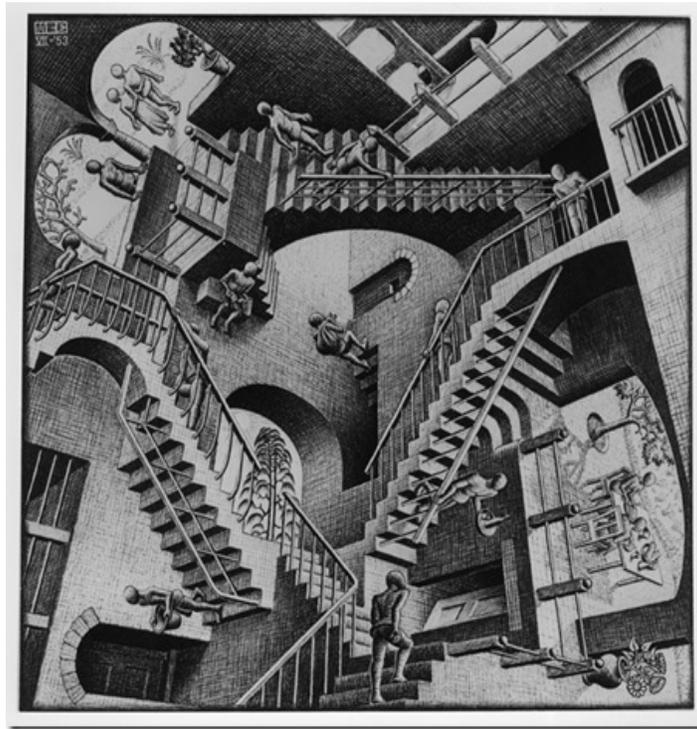
Through all of this, I believe there are only just a few key points we really need to focus on in order to express the highest capacity of ourselves, living our life through all of its experiences in non-judgment, and finding that "silver lining" when we are surrounded by thunderstorms:

***Embrace the experience. It is neither good nor bad, right? We all have the right to LIVE!!!
Honor our feelings: they lead to our thoughts.***

AND *think* about our thoughts – this is where our ability to shift perspectives and take NEW actions comes into play! (Restructure if we feel we need to!)

Finally, when we react to our feelings and thoughts or take action on a thought, allow ourselves the emotional freedom of non-judgment in that action or reaction. In that, there is a beauty in all that we are, all that others are, and all that life is.

BUT... all of that is just a matter of perspective!



"Relativity" By M.C. Escher, 1953

Much Love,
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