

The World Is Your Mirror

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In the movie, “Stuart Saves His Family,” comedian Al Franken plays Stuart Smalley, a child of dysfunctional parents and a frequent attendee of 12-step programs. Stuart tries to change his life and save his family from themselves after he gets fired from his cable show where he not very convincingly recites personal affirmations into a mirror. The movie is based on a skit Franken made popular on Saturday Night Live in the mid-90s.

While positive affirmations are important, Stuart Smalley’s character humorously illustrates that we need to take it a step further than simply chanting phrases such as, “I like myself!” To really get the results we seek, requires a bit more effort and considerably more dedication, perhaps life long dedication. Consider this statement by author, Anais Nin: *“We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are.”* My view about personal change and growth is based on the understanding that Life is our mirror. It reflects back to us beliefs and ideas in our minds that we either refuse to acknowledge or cannot identify. It took me a long time to really learn what this means, actually I am still learning.

As I challenged my thoughts and feelings about upsetting personal events, I truly came to realize that the outer incidents that trigger these reactions in me simply mirror my own nature. It had nothing at all to do with what had happened or who else was involved. If I didn't have beliefs around the issues that upset me, where would my reactions come from? If I didn't have some internal reference, I wouldn't have reacted at all. I began to see that without my story, my personal interpretation of what was happening, I could look at the situation from a neutral perspective. I also saw that I could accept my life as perfect now and act without judgment, blame, or guilt. From this place of peace, my desires and choices become very clear and stress free.

Peace does have a price: it requires us to stop fighting with ourselves. While there are many healing modalities that can aid and rebalance our energies, ultimately the only way to achieve lasting personal peace is to address the conflicting thoughts and feelings about ourselves and the world around us. Positive affirmations, while helpful, remain superficial and ineffective in producing long lasting change unless the predominant or underlying thoughts and feelings are also met with understanding. As Byron Katie says, once you do this, “Your thoughts let go of you.” We interpret the events in our lives through our predominant thoughts and feelings, thus they influence our experience. Katie says that thoughts are harmless unless we believe them and that it is the *attachment* to the thought that causes suffering.

Underlying or supporting thoughts are the beliefs behind the thoughts we normally hear in our heads. These are the root thoughts or agreements that often operate subconsciously. Think of the surface thought as the locomotive of the ‘train of thought,’ coming straight towards us. From this position, we often cannot see that many other cars trail behind. The supporting thoughts become the other rail cars attached to the locomotive, carrying the passengers and cargo, giving the locomotive purpose. Without the underlying attachments (passengers and cargo), the surface thought (locomotive) has no purpose. It ceases to be useful. Unless underlying thoughts are addressed, the same situations will keep being created despite much well-intentioned positive affirming.

Here's another way to look at it: Imagine that one day you find your living room carpet is soaking wet. You pull out your wet vac to remove all the water. The next day the carpet is wet again, and you vacuum it again. Everyday the carpet gets wet and everyday you vacuum the carpet. It is not until you find the pipe leak in the wall and fix it that the wet carpet problem is permanently resolved. Like the leaky pipe, the predominant thought or intention always prevails.

If thoughts are the train, then feelings are the engine that creates energetic movement within our body and the universe. The feelings and emotions behind the words we say to ourselves give our thoughts power, establishing an energetic frequency of attraction to the desired (or undesired!) outcome. While this is not the sole determiner of what happens to us, our feelings are, like thought, under our influence. We are so often in our heads, not knowing how disconnected we are from felt experience. Thinking has replaced feeling for many of us. Our feelings connect us with our soul. They are the language of the soul, rather than the words we think. While positive thinking is great, we also need to practice positive feeling; otherwise we end up with a sense of emptiness and disconnectedness. Current research by the Institute of HeartMath (see resources) demonstrates that access to these positive feelings begins with the heart, rather than the brain, and starts with sincerely generating feelings like gratitude, for example.

Personal growth then becomes more than simply saying nice things to oneself. Consciously discovering and changing supporting thoughts or agreements (see the work of Don Miguel Ruiz & Byron Katie) combined with consistently and sincerely feeling positive emotions like love, appreciation, gratitude, and care can bring about tremendous growth. This takes effort and deep personal commitment. It is really a spiritual journey that has no end. We are the only ones who can do it. No one can get into our heads (yet!) and change our minds for us.

It is important to keep in mind that lasting change takes time and a consistent application of new systems of thought and feeling before the ego will accept the change. Persistence and patience are required. The ego is our ally, not our enemy. It helps us maintain integrity with our belief system, whatever it may be. The ego is an automatic operating system based on our past beliefs. It is not able to make moral judgments. It simply reacts with programmed responses; much like a computer does what it is programmed to do, without question. As new agreements and beliefs are made and integrated, as new neural pathways are created in the brain and heart that reflect these new patterns, the ego will accept and support them.

It is normal to feel fear when making positive changes or trying something new. It is simply the ego's inability to calculate an outcome. It is as if when faced with a situation that it has not encountered before (no program to follow), it freezes. Our response to a frozen ego is often fear because we are accustomed to the automatic feedback the ego provides. In fact many of us are on automatic pilot all the time, without awareness, accepting what the ego tells us as fact. We make assumptions based on the information the ego provides, and then act as if it were the truth, without questioning it. Don Miguel Ruiz says that 90% of what we believe about the world (information we commonly get from the ego) is based on misconceptions and half-truths. This knowledge can be a motivating factor for personal growth. Accepting the nature of the ego while acknowledging its limitations may awaken in us a desire to transcend its automatic responses and align with the Higher Mind. What if a frozen ego is a window of opportunity opening to the unlimited potential that lies within?

Who are we? We are NOT our body, the ego, our thoughts, or our feelings. Love is our true nature. We are emanations of Divine Love. We are expressions of God having a human experience. We are

love. We are timeless and eternal. The physical world, the world of duality, is a hologram, a way God devised so that the soul can experience itself. What better way to know what love is (your Essence), than by also experiencing what love is not?

A minister once told me: Become the "watcher." He said that we are actually the one who watches our thoughts. (Ask yourself, "Who is it that is watching me do or think the things 'I' do?") Begin to connect from that perspective and change becomes easier. We can then see that our thoughts are not us, they are simply clouds in the mind that drift by. Thoughts are always neutral. It is our attachment to them that creates the conflict. When we can remain neutral and love where we are right now, without judgment - which is available to anyone regardless of their personal situation - bliss happens spontaneously. As we do this consistently, over time bliss becomes a neural, mental, and emotional habit. God's plan for us is thus fulfilled: Love experiences itself.

RESOURCES

"The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz offers clear and insightful information about how our thoughts influence us and how the dream of society has created our current mind-set. As we adopt his four alternate agreements for living and consistently apply them, we can begin to see our lives from a more heart-centered perspective.

A simple way of questioning one's thoughts can be found in the works of Byron Katie. She is the author of "Loving What Is" and "I Need Your Love, Is That True?" Her website, www.TheWork.com, is loaded with information. Also simple, yet powerful. Katie's work activates The Four Agreements on a deeper level by asking four basic questions. We learn how to question our thoughts in a meaningful way. Byron Katie introduced me to the concept that it is our attachment to our thoughts, or the meaning we attribute to a thought, that creates the problem rather than the thought itself.

Research conducted by The HeartMath Institute has scientifically proven that sincerely feeling heart emotions like gratitude on a consistent basis has profound physiological effects. They have developed a heart monitor/meditation device called the emWave to help people reconnect with positive heart feeling. It is a great tool for showing us how disconnected we are from feeling. [Click here](#) for more information about emWave and HeartMath.

The Law of Attraction is a powerful concept. Abraham, as channeled by Esther Hicks, has been teaching about the Law of Attraction and how the emotions power our thoughts for 19 years. (www.abraham-hicks.com) Powerful stuff. "The Secret" (www.TheSecret.tv) is a DVD that has come out recently and also is about LOA. Both sources clearly illustrate that we must positively think and (most importantly!) FEEL from the heart consistently to get what we want in life.

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