

A Big Picture Book

What Do You Do...

What Do You Do... When All Hell Breaks Loose?

When All Hell Breaks Loose?

Kenneth James Michael MacLean

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Loose?

Life's Ups and Downs
Explained

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Introduction

Have you ever made a decision to improve something in your life, and then just the opposite happens?

Why does a desire to change for the better sometimes lead to the walls crashing down?

I'm talking about the kind of situation where you vow to be more conscientious at work, but during the following week you make twice as many mistakes as usual. Or, you make up your mind to pay off your credit card balance by the end of the year, and a week later your car breaks down and you have to use the VISA to pay for it. Or perhaps you decide to be nicer to your girlfriend, but she becomes more irritated with you than before! Sometimes these negative manifestations come in bunches, one after the other. Why does your decision to change for the better lead to crummy outcomes? It feels like a kickback from the universe into your life, a slap in the face, and it makes a joke out of the maxim that 'you create your own reality.' I call this phenomenon, 'all hell breaking loose.'

When this happened to me, I assigned my misfortunes to bad luck. Or I'd say, "that's the way life is," or "It's my karma." Sometimes I was told "you didn't work hard enough," or, "you're not talented enough." None of these explanations, however, clarify how or why I went wrong.

We can simply accept these excuses, but then the story is over. What I have done in the past is to simply give up on my positive resolution and accept my fate.

I have discovered, I think, the reason for this phenomenon. When you know why something is occurring, the mystery goes away and you can then deal with it, instead of giving up!

In order to explain why all hell breaks loose, we have to introduce three important concepts.

SECTION 1

Duality and Change

The physical universe is composed of contrasting environments and conditions. Desert-ocean, night-day, hot-cold, mountain-plain, wet-dry, happy-sad, smooth-rough, life-death. I could have gone on for pages and pages, but you get the idea. This concept is often called duality, or polarity.

Duality is entirely natural. In order to have a physical universe, there must be differentiation, otherwise, everything is the same. If all matter had to exist at the same temperature, for example, we'd never be able to heat water for our coffee in the morning, or make iced tea on a hot summer's day.

We all know how boring it is when things don't change. When it rains for four days in a row, you long to see the sun. When you've just broken up with your third boyfriend in eight months, you wish that you could find someone different. When the money runs out before the end of the month, you feel the same old frustration. Sometimes, even great good fortune, if continued long enough, leads to a desire for some excitement. The desire for change is natural, and reflects the design of the physical universe itself.

We've all heard the saying, "something is either growing or decaying, nothing ever stays the same." This statement reflects the idea that everything in the physical universe is in motion.

Science tells us that even in a solid, the atoms within it are vibrating. And of course, within the atom itself, electrons are flying madly about the nucleus. In other words, something that has no movement cannot exist. So material substances are always changing. And so too our lives are always changing. Change is a necessary component of existence itself.

The concepts of duality and change also apply in human relations. In human relationships, duality finds its expression in the emotions. At the bottom of the scale are crummy emotions like apathy, fear and hatred, and at the top are good-feeling ones like happiness, excitement and love. Human emotions reflect the design of the physical universe itself.

Just as in a chemical reaction, your emotional state can change rapidly, or gradually. Heat applied to a pot of water, for example, takes a few minutes to boil, as you stand there impatiently watching it. But a flaming match thrown on a puddle of gasoline immediately bursts into flame. My father had a hair-trigger temper, but my step-mother is much calmer. It takes quite a lot of heat to make her teapot toot!

A rude comment, or a vulgar action, is sometimes enough to change your opinion of another in an instant. That happened to me recently with a neighbor of mine, whose kids began to build a tree fort on my property. When I politely told them to take it down, their mother left a profanity-laced message scrawled on a piece of paper in my backyard. When I first met my wife I hated

her. But then one day that hate turned to love. I remember the exact moment it happened.

Human relationships are constantly changing. Your daughter might love you one instant, but hate you the next if you won't drive her to the mall. My wife and I get along famously, but that doesn't mean we never argue!

As a species we have chosen to estrange ourselves from the planet by polluting our water and atmosphere, destroying other life forms and fighting amongst ourselves. Nevertheless, all consciousness and physical matter both reflect the properties of duality and change. Therefore, Spirit and matter are intimately connected.

Life is constantly changing on a scale from good to bad. The concepts of duality and change are very important in understanding the reason for life's ups and downs. But there is another, very important concept we must mention in order to get the complete picture.

The Role of Beliefs

There is a very important relationship you have with yourself, composed of your personal set of beliefs about life. These beliefs directly affect your attitudes and your emotional state, the kinds of things (and people) you like or dislike, and determine the actions you take.

Thought precedes action.

At first this statement sounds pretty trivial. "So what?" you say. "I can't buy that new car I want with a thought."

That is certainly true, but thoughts and beliefs are far more powerful than we've been taught. They're invisible, and because our scientific culture operates on the idea of, "it's only true if it can be observed," we neglect to pay attention to them. But that's like a running back in football going out on the field without studying his playbook. The quarterback calls the play and everybody starts moving, but our guy stands there without a clue, and gets crushed by the onrushing defensive lineman. That's what happens in life when our beliefs don't match up with what we say we want.

What is a Belief?

1) A belief is a collection of thoughts on a specific subject that you keep thinking over and over, which result from your decisions or preferences on that subject.

2) Beliefs determine a person's attitude and actions, and define how others respond to you. Your beliefs ultimately define the parameters of your experience on every life issue.

3) There are two kinds of beliefs: limiting and empowering. Each of us has a mixture of limiting and empowering beliefs.

4) Beliefs become established and activated in our consciousness either through observation, by faith, or through conscious creation.

Sam Doakes' partner embezzled money from their startup company and skipped town. The company went bankrupt and Sam lost all his savings paying off their creditors. Sam wants to make sure that his son Joe never makes the same mistake, so he tells him, "You can never trust people." Sam says this so many times that Joe begins to believe it.

Sam has a belief based on observation. Joe has a faith-based belief. Growing up, Joe just takes his father's word that people can't be trusted and begins to think and act accordingly, even when people are nice to him, for Joe knows that eventually they will turn on him. "Look what happened to my dad," he always points out. Joe's friend Pete, however, believes that people are

wonderful. This is a decision he made consciously, because it makes him feel good. Pete's consciously created belief leads him to always look for the best aspects of a person, and he tends to draw those positive characteristics out in others. Joe thinks Pete is naïve. "Just wait," Joe tells his friend. "One day someone is going to take advantage of you."

Both Sam and Joe have limiting beliefs.

Pete has an empowering belief that allows him to go out into the world with confidence.

"Ha!" you might laugh. "Pete IS naïve! It's impossible to have everything go your way all the time." Well, that's just another limiting belief.

Beliefs tend to reinforce themselves. Like a powerful magnet, they attract more and more experiences that match them, which makes you believe even more. A limiting belief gives you tunnel vision. A positive belief can expand your awareness of yourself and the world.

Beliefs are neither good, nor bad. They just determine your attitude toward life and shape the experiences you will have. A woman who believes that animals spread disease, for example, will probably not keep a pet. A man who believes that women are untrustworthy will probably never have a long term relationship. A country that believes that freedom can only be maintained by fighting will become involved in many wars.

The problem with limiting beliefs is that they can take over your life, especially if they are faith-based. Not even the

observation of something that's different changes it. In other words, Joe never notices that when he first meets people, they are pretty friendly towards him. Joe's suspicious nature gradually turns them against him, however, reinforcing his belief. This self-reinforcing phenomenon is why beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Stubborn-ness is just holding onto a faith-based belief despite all evidence to the contrary. You cease to accurately observe, and fail to learn from your mistakes. Holding onto beliefs that are no longer serving you is the reason why people continue to make the same mistakes over and over again. Because Joe's belief about people is so general, he might find himself becoming unsuccessful in many areas of life.

The important point here is that a belief is a set of conscious thoughts. There is an idea in our society that subconscious thoughts can rise up out of your mind, willy-nilly, and dictate your actions. However, a subconscious thought, by definition, is beneath the surface of your awareness. Therefore, it must have very little power to affect your conscious actions.

Only conscious thoughts have the power to affect your actions. The reason some thoughts and beliefs appear to be subconscious is because they are so familiar we don't notice them anymore. You might say that this is a distinction without a difference, but there is a very important difference.

Beliefs are always accessible.

A subconscious thought, it is said, is beyond your reach. It is supposed to be hidden in a compartment of your mind that is not available to you. This idea was first advanced by Sigmund Freud who, in order to explain neurotic and irrational behavior, developed the idea that consciousness is layered into unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. Because neurotic behavior has no rational explanation, it made sense to Freud that some psychic events must percolate below the surface of the mind; then, like a cancer, explode into conscious awareness. Studies of perception show that our conscious minds are only aware of 2,000 of the approximately 400,000 bits of information that impinge on our senses every second. Because science believes in the biological basis for consciousness -- a theory which states that your awareness of yourself originates in a pile of protoplasm called the brain -- these studies have been interpreted by some to mean that the subconscious mind can exercise inordinate influence over a person's conscious decision making. Defense lawyers often use this idea to excuse murder and other heinous crimes when claiming that their client was 'not responsible for his or her actions.'

Psychologists, psychiatrists and cognitive scientists cannot even agree on the definition of mind. Subconscious, preconscious and conscious are therefore just metaphors, and have no unanimously agreed upon validity.

The subconscious mind is itself just a belief, and has all of the power and validity of a belief.

Belief in the subconscious mind is very powerful, because over the past century it has become widely accepted in our schools and in our popular culture. I would like to point out, however, that it is a limiting, not an empowering belief. The belief that the 'subconscious mind' can affect your conscious actions places you as a victim in relation to your own choices! Such a philosophy assigns a human being the status of an automaton, robotically responding to stimulus from the environment. Adopting such a philosophy gives you a new (limiting) belief, which then begins to dictate the parameters of your life. For those of us who want to causatively and positively influence our lives, this is not such a good idea!

After years of therapy, I have learned that a person always has access to his or her beliefs. You may have to do a little work to find them, but it is always possible to do so consciously.

We have now laid the groundwork to explain life's ups and downs from an empowering point of view.

Life's Ups and Downs Explained

Have you ever noticed that sometimes, all hell breaks loose right after you've made a strong resolution to change? You vow to make up with your sister-in-law whom you haven't spoken to in years, but when you do she riles up everyone in the family against you. You decide to lose some weight and begin to exercise, and then you sprain your ankle. You decide to take that promising new job, but soon after the company goes bankrupt.

What is it about change that is so powerful? Why do things sometimes almost immediately go the opposite of how you intended? Well, there is a full explanation in my book, "The Vibrational Universe," but I'm going to give you something I learned about life's ups and downs.

It IS possible for things to go great all the time. BUT you have to be a person whose thoughts and beliefs are completely aligned to good outcomes. I don't know about you, but I am not aware of anyone like that. Maybe a guru, or a holy man. But not people like you and me.

Ups and downs happen because we have thoughts and beliefs to match. It's as simple as that.

"No, that's wrong," you say. "My thoughts are crummy because my life is crummy." Nope. That's backwards. Thought precedes action and manifestation. Thought precedes emotion. A health crisis might have appeared to come upon you suddenly,

but I assure you it has been a slow, gradual process. You might make a decision to change jobs and line up a good one, but if you don't handle that fundamental belief that says, "Things never go right for me the first time," something will happen. Like your company going bankrupt. Or your sister-in-law turning the family against you. Or a sprained ankle. Then, after you've experienced a downer, your negative thinking becomes reinforced by reality.

Downs happen when there is a belief that downs are inevitable. Ups happen when there is a belief that ups are possible. The content of your thoughts and beliefs determine the mix of your ups and downs. Therefore, it behooves us all to get a handle on what we think and believe.

I'm not saying that you have control over the actions of others. What I am saying is that you have control over your own thoughts, emotions and actions and therefore, the way others respond to you.

Because this is a world of opposites, when you are down, you are never that far from an up. And when you're up, you're never that far from a down. They're on opposite ends of the same scale! In other words, both ends of the scale called "money" exist as distinct possibilities. On one end (the right) is "lots of money" and on the other end (the left) is "not enough money."

Visualize it as a slider in a computer program. That's a little button on a bar that you can push to the left or right with your mouse.



On the left is the outcome you don't want. On the right is the outcome you want. The bar is an issue you have in your life. The button is your belief(s) about that issue. And the movement of the button is your decision to change.

But a funny thing sometimes happens when you decide to move that button to the right. Because of duality, both ends of the bar are connected to each other. If our picture were entirely accurate, our slider bar would actually be a ring, with the left side connected to the right side. That's because having more money (for example) is conceptually and intimately related to not having enough money, just as day and night are related by the presence or absence of light. I don't care how rich you are, there is always the possibility of losing everything. If you had all your money in Enron stock, you did! No matter how happy you are, there is always the possibility of becoming sad again. For any life condition there exists its opposite.

Furthermore, when you have a strong desire for more of something, it's almost always because you don't have enough of it. Therefore, you can very often trigger "not enough of" when you really desire "more of." They are just two aspects of the

same thing. And that is why all hell can break loose in your life when you have a strong desire for positive change. In fact, the stronger your desire, the MORE likely it is that you are on the wrong end of the bar, so it's more likely that the crap will hit the fan.

In other words, it is almost inevitable that you will experience something unwanted when you have a strong desire for change, because you are currently sitting in the unwanted condition and the beliefs which brought it about. When you begin to extricate yourself from a muddy bog, you're bound to stir up some muck in the process! So don't feel bad if things immediately start going in the opposite direction -- all hell breaking loose is a perfectly natural and understandable phenomenon.

It seems mysterious because your good intentions lead to bad outcomes. But we've now seen why this happens. The good news is, all hell breaking loose is always temporary IF you can keep your eyes on the goal in mind. People often panic, or give up, when unwanted results obtain from a positive intention, but such a reaction just sends you right back where you don't want to be. In other words, if you can stick to your guns, if you can hold onto your dreams and keep your attention on B instead of A, your life will smooth out on a higher level than before. It may take a while to get the new attitude established within you as powerfully as the old one was, but what's the alternative? More of the same old crap!

The system is set up to bring you more of what you have your attention on. By focusing on B more than A, the old beliefs become deactivated and the new ones at B become dominant, and your life begins to change in the direction you want. That's how the 'power of positive thinking' works (and it's also why 'positive thinking' gets a bad name).

Is it possible to make an immediate, gigantic leap forward in your attitude from where you are? Of course it is! But how many of us are capable of that? I know I'm not. The degree to which things will begin to go better is the degree to which you can change your focus from point A, at the negative end of the scale, to point B at the positive end.

Of course there are lots of people who have tons of money, and still want more. These people are already at the right end of the bar, and their strong desire will just bring them more of the good stuff. Like the billionaire who bought a lottery ticket and won \$300 million a few years back. "Why did he win?" people asked. "He didn't need it!" Well that's true, but he already had a strong alignment to wealth, so the universe gave him more wealth. That's what happens. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. That's a natural law which some people call the Law of Attraction. Others call it "getting on a roll." You can get on a good roll or a bad roll. But once you begin to build momentum, the tendency is towards the direction you're already going in.

There are a lot more people who want more money because they don't have enough of it, than there are people who want more money when they already have lots. As I said before, desire is strongest when you aren't where you want to be. Therefore, change very often activates the very thing that is not wanted even more strongly. The desire for the upside often makes us more aware of the downside.

The Fundamental Reason for Life's Ups and Downs

Ups and downs occur primarily because of the belief systems we have incorporated into our lives. We live on a planet, and in a society, that firmly believes in the following:

1) Consciousness is biologically based, and when you die, you're dead. This means that death is the most horrible thing that can happen to anyone, and it must be avoided at all costs.

2) You are born flawed in the eyes of God. So you are basically unworthy from the first breath you take.

3) You have to take the bad with the good. You can never, ever, always have it your own way.

4) You always have to compromise to get what you want.

There are many more, and I'm sure the reader can add to the list.

I want to point out that these are all BELIEFS.

The power of a belief is so absolute that if you believe something, you will begin to arrange your life around that belief. Beliefs are self-fulfilling prophecies! So if you don't want to experience the downs along with the ups, you have to get yourself some new thoughts. As Mike Ditka, former coach of the Superbowl winning Chicago Bears once said, "If you don't believe you can win the Superbowl, you can't win it." Iron Mike understands something very profound, that all of us instinctively comprehend as well: If you believe you can't do something, it can't ever happen.

When Jill's company goes bankrupt, should she give up on her dream of a great job? A lot of people would. However, even though Jill has a belief that things can never go right the first time, she can still pick herself up off the floor and try again. As long as Jill puts more of her attention on what is wanted, and less on failure, she will eventually find the job of her dreams.

But what happens if Jill has the belief that "things will never go right for me?" Well, she will never fully succeed. She will always fall a little short of her goals. Jill will always be just a little dissatisfied, because she will always have some part of her attention on the wrong end of the bar.

It's always possible to change the way you think and what you believe. People don't like to spend much time doing that, because they don't think it's worthwhile. "Hard work is what gets you where you want to go," they'll say. And while working at something is of course necessary, it's not the most important factor. Believe it or not, your own beliefs are the primary reason why you succeed or fail. And your beliefs are for sure the main reason behind how you feel. If you feel rotten, you have a belief that is activating that condition in your life. I don't care whether that condition is health related, or economic, or a relationship issue.

When you clean up your thoughts and beliefs on the subject of relationships, for example, you will begin to meet better

people. You will for sure begin to feel better. If you don't believe me, try it for yourself!

All explanations for personal failure that involve the actions of others are false. They are rationalizations, and stem from the inability to completely focus on the goal. Here are a few examples.

"The market won't support your product."

"Nobody wanted to read your book, that's why it didn't sell."

"You can't play the guitar or sing, so don't even think of becoming a famous artist."

"Your startup company isn't going to make it. 80% of all new business startups fail within the first year."

The guy who had the idea to record music on CD's didn't let the little fact that ALL music was recorded on vinyl stop him.

Look at the drivel that gets published every year, and the great books that don't sell. Even drivel can find a paying audience, because there are lots of drivel-y people out there. People will buy anything. If you don't believe me, take a look at the Oriental Trading catalog.

Speaking of drivel, consider the bloke known as Tiny Tim. A freak with fuzzy hair who couldn't sing or play (in my opinion). I remember seeing this cat on the "Tonight Show," screeching out a song called "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" on a badly tuned ukulele. I couldn't believe my eyes or ears! One thing you can say about Tiny Tim, however: the man was passionate about his

music. And that passion carried him to the top of the mountain. Tiny had the guts to put himself and his music out there, despite the ridicule of his many critics. Tiny Tim became a huge star, making hundreds of TV and concert appearances around the world. At the peak of his popularity, he was earning \$60,000 a week in Las Vegas, and played to sellout crowds at Caesar's Palace. The moral of the story: If a weirdo like Tiny Tim can make it, anyone can!

And who cares what others have done with their businesses (or their lives)? What happens to you is determined by you, period. To the degree that you come off the idea that you are source point in your life, is the degree to which you have ups and downs. Life is not a random series of occurrences. While it is certainly true that no one can predict the future, it is also true that you can choreograph, in a broad sense, the direction of your life. Ask any successful person in any field and he or she will tell you that unequivocally.

Section 1 Summary

1) Duality and change are quintessential properties of our physical world. Life, and human relations, reflect these properties.

2) Like the outline of a novel or a presentation, beliefs determine the experiences you will have.

3) When you have a strong desire for change, you are usually at the wrong end of the scale. Therefore, it is likely that things will go wrong at first. That's because the issues you've been stuck in begin to get unintentionally activated.

4) This phenomenon is natural and understandable. If you just relax and keep your focus on the goal, your life will smooth out and the changes you want will begin to appear.

SECTION 2

Beliefs, Trauma, and the Subconscious Mind

When you begin the process of change you start with good intentions, but often go in the opposite direction. However, when you understand that a desire for change often activates those old, self-limiting beliefs you've been lugging around, then the mystery disappears.

We often pick up these beliefs in childhood. We are physically dependent on our parents to provide us with the necessities of life. Parents often demand submission to their ways of doing things, as we all know, and this can lead to a strong mental influence over the mind of the child. Moreover, as children we naturally want to love our parents, and often decide to emulate them. Sometimes, if you are like me, you wanted nothing to do with them. Regardless, we pick up on their limiting beliefs. We do the same from family members, teachers, authority figures, classmates, and other peers.

If dad is an alcoholic and has trouble getting along with mom, for example, his son is likely to be influenced by his father's behavior. When a person travels to England, he might find himself beginning to talk with a British accent. This phenomenon is called entrainment, and was discovered by the Dutch scientist Christian Huygens in his work with pendulum clocks. Huygens noticed that when he set one of his pendulums

in motion, the others tended to follow suit in exactly the same way. Thoughts and beliefs can be entrained as well, especially those of a child.

The point is, the beliefs we assume growing up are often uninspected. They're sitting right out there, but we've become so used to them that we don't notice them anymore. But a belief is a belief, and it doesn't matter how you got them. They're still affecting your life.

In my case, I picked up a whole series of debilitating thoughts and attitudes when my mom got sick and died, when I was a child. I was terrified, and I couldn't understand how such a terrible thing could happen.

"My mom didn't really love me, or she wouldn't have abandoned me."

"Life is terrifying, because you'll just get an incurable disease."

"It doesn't matter how healthy you are, or how good you are. You'll die horribly anyway."

"Evil is more powerful than good."

"If you ever get sick, you'll die from it."

"Medical doctors don't know anything."

"Children can't be happy in families."

As I found out later in therapy, I decided these things when I was 3 years old. These decisions became woven into my worldview, and had a powerful negative influence on my life. My mother, Lorraine, became ill in 1954. I don't remember anything

at all about Lorraine Martin. I am told she was tall for the time (5' 9"), good looking and a pretty cheerful person. That fall she died of leukemia at the age of 29. My father was devastated, and so was I, and so was the rest of my family. For several weeks, our family felt like inmates in a prisoner of war camp. As Lorraine sank further and further, we all became sadder and sadder, and more and more hopeless. How could such a bright and beautiful person be dying? We asked. How could God allow it? What kind of a world is it where the good people die, and the greedy and evil flourish?

These were the questions my family asked themselves day after day. At least that is what they tell me, because I had no recollection of that period at all.

I didn't remember most of it, because I blocked it out. It was too painful, so I made a conscious decision never to think about my mother, ever again. That led to a decision to avoid my family members whenever possible. When my father remarried, I didn't want to have anything to do with my step-mom's two children, now a part of our larger family. I even avoided my sister. I buried myself in my studies, and after my homework, left the house to ride my bike all over the city, or, when it was warm enough, to play baseball on one of the vacant city fields a mile away from our house with the neighborhood kids. When I got older, I'd leave the house right after dinner and hang out with my friends. I got married, but never had kids. I just knew

that it was impossible for me to have a family. I accepted it, never questioned it.

Such is the power of a belief.

Trauma

The insidious thing about my decision to simply avoid my family was that it worked most of the time. You know the old saying, "If it ain't broke don't fix it." Well, that's darn good advice! When not in contact with my family, I never had to think about that uncomfortable time. And so that old trauma simply sat there, walled off.

In therapy, I found out that the power of a belief has nothing to do with how old you were when you made the decision.

A belief is just a belief, and it can determine how you feel, and the course of your life.

Negative emotion obscures thought. That's really important. Here's something else that's really important: behind all negative emotion is a thought or a belief that keeps it activated. That's a hard and fast rule, and stems from the principle that thought comes before emotion, and action.

It's easy to understand how thought precedes action. When you bake a cake, you need a recipe. You have to think about what ingredients you need and how you're going to put them together. When you build a house you need a blueprint. That

blueprint is the result of a lot of thought about houses. And it works the same way for emotions. If you think the thought "I hate Joe" long enough, I guarantee that you can work yourself into a frenzy about Joe. Or the boss. Or your mother-in-law. Or anything. Thought precedes emotion.

If you never had a negative thought in your life, you would never feel a negative emotion. You'd be happy all the time! And healthy, too. The way you feel is determined by the way you think. When you think happy thoughts you feel happy, and when you think sad thoughts you feel sad.

The successful resolution of trauma always results in positive emotion. When the trauma is released, you feel better. But if you look carefully, you'll always find, behind the trauma, an underlying belief that keeps the trauma stuck to you. I've spent my share of time in therapy and I've found that all emotional trauma is just my own resistance to something bad that happened to me. My mom died a long time ago. There's nothing happening right now that could cause me to feel so rotten about it! So why did I feel so crummy whenever I thought about it? Because back then, my 3 year old mind made a lot of terrifying conclusions about life, health, and medicine, and families, and love, and death. As I said before, I discovered that it didn't matter that I was only 3 when I made these decisions. Your choices are incredibly powerful, no matter where on the timeline of your life you make them. This makes more sense when you look at a human being as a spirit temporarily occupying a

physical body, in the spirit–mind–body framework. The age of the body is then less important than the consciousness inhabiting it.

The idea that behind all trauma is an underlying belief, is applied in a type of therapy called Traumatic Incident Reduction, which has been shown to effectively handle cases suffering from PTSD, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. TIR was developed by Dr. Frank Gerbode, a psychiatrist. This kind of therapy recognizes the truth that behind all negative emotion are thoughts and beliefs. The patient simply goes over and over the event, reliving it, confronting it, and releasing the emotional pain associated with it. After a time, the patient always discovers the decisions and beliefs that held the trauma in place. There's an "aha!" moment when you realize that you were causing all of your own pain, and it's very empowering.

During my time in therapy, I noticed a pattern. Every time there was a successful resolution of trauma, I experienced one of those "aha!" moments. And when I didn't succeed, I didn't have that moment of realization. These experiences helped to crystallize an important truth in my mind: If the removal of trauma makes you feel good, then maybe life is SUPPOSED to feel good. Maybe that's the way life is designed!

Feelings and Emotions

I discovered that there is a difference between a feeling and an emotion. A feeling of well-being is something inherent to all life, but emotion is experienced on an individual basis. Emotion goes from positive to negative, as we all know. It's a scale (see Appendix). At the bottom there is apathy, depression, grief and fear and at the top there is enthusiasm, joy, and serenity. The higher you go up the scale, the closer you get to the fundamental vibration of consciousness itself, the closer you get to the OM, the fundamental vibration of the universe. People a lot smarter than I and a lot more enlightened have described this feeling, and you can read what they have to say about it. The point is, disease and negative emotion can only manifest when there is self-limiting thought.

Deepak Chopra, and others, have shown us that your thoughts have the ability to affect your health. And they have the ability to affect your emotions as well.

As I said above, the default condition for all life is a feeling of well-being. When the body is sick, it naturally wants to recover and get healthy again. If well-being wasn't the default, then when you got sick you'd get sicker. Of course things decay and die, but that's because this physical experience is intended to be temporary! Our bodies are not designed to spend an eternity here on earth.

Karma and Past Lives

I've spent dozens of hours in past life regression. I'm a firm believer in past lives, because I believe that consciousness is non-physical, and eternal. Bodies decay and die, but consciousness lives on. And so it is possible for a conscious being to live many lives. However, over the years of my therapy I made an important discovery: anything that is bothering you has its roots in the present life.

My past life regressions were fun! And they often resulted in understanding more about myself. But they never completely resolved any trauma.

From this I concluded that we start over every lifetime. The slate is wiped clean, and we come in fresh and new. Look in a baby's eyes and you can see the sweet innocence there. I have a number of animal pictures on my wall, one of a baby polar bear, another of a baby leopard, a baby monkey and two ducklings. We've all seen the cute pictures of puppies and kittens. In their eyes is the purity, love and trust that is a fundamental aspect of all life, all consciousness, everywhere.

This means, therefore, that original sin does not exist. There is no karma carried from lifetime to lifetime.

For me, this understanding was very powerful, because it meant that I could resolve, within the present life, ANYTHING that had happened to me. If we really are eternal beings, just

think how long it would take to make any progress if we had to cover every lifetime we ever lived!

Beliefs and Becoming -- Possibilities

Because a belief is just a collection of decisions, it is always possible to change your mind. In other words, the power of conscious decision making allows you to simply make up a new belief, which will then begin to define your experience. For example, Barb has always loved to make others laugh. Among her friends, she is known as the life of the party. Barb is upbeat and funny, and has a natural turn with words and a flair for story-telling. One Saturday afternoon the friends are out at the mall for some shopping, lunch, and a chat. Barb has just regaled them with a story about work, in which Jeff, who occupies a workstation across from her, accidentally tripped the boss as he walked down the corridor between their cubicles. Everyone is laughing so hard that tears are rolling down their faces. Sally says suddenly: "Barb, why don't you tell that story at the open house next Friday night?" At first Barb is stunned. She has never thought about appearing on stage before, but the idea hits her like a ton of bricks. "You're really funny, you know," Jane says. "Yeah!" Cathy seconds. "You can make anyone laugh." Liz agrees. "The Improv is holding auditions at the end of the month." Barb immediately feels nervous about appearing on-stage, and what people will think of her. She knows she has a

tendency to stutter a little when speaking in front of strangers. That night, however, she realizes that she is quick-witted and spontaneous, and gets more and more excited about comedy. She decides to see a voice coach and to audition.

At this point, Barb has made two decisions, and has a sort of tentative belief that she MIGHT have the talent to become a comedienne. How far she goes with it is entirely up to her. If Barb is like most people, a lot will probably depend on the reactions she gets to her coffee house performance and her audition. But even if she doesn't do well at first, a strong desire and belief that "I can make people laugh" will eventually guarantee success. She will seek out other performers and learn from them, and work even harder on her own routines. In short, a consciously created belief can be just as strong as a belief based on observation, or faith.

The power of a belief is absolute. The stronger your belief, the more certainty you have, and the more your life begins to track with your decision. Our friend Joe, for example, is convinced that people can't be trusted even when they are friendly, and his relationships are marked by tension and conflict.

Facts, behavior, and evidence to the contrary can be irrelevant in the face of a strongly held belief. An *idée fixe*, or fixed idea, may become established so strongly that it can affect a person's power of reasoning. Even a highly intelligent person

may become enslaved to an *idée fixe*. In an article by Carl Sargent PhD and Hans J. Enysenck PhD entitled "Psi, Science and the Future," the great scientist Hermann von Helmholtz is quoted as saying: 'Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society, nor even the evidence of my own senses, would lead me to believe in the transmission of thought from one person to another independent of the recognized channels of sense.' Here we simply have an irrational belief: I have made up my mind, and nothing, even demonstrable evidence, will change it.

Empowering beliefs eventually lead to positive outcomes, and limiting beliefs eventually result in negative outcomes. You are the only one who can decide which way you will lean.

Section 2 Summary

1) Beliefs define the parameters of your existence. Childhood beliefs are just as powerful as those assumed in adulthood, and vice-versa.

2) It is possible to resolve any trauma you have, and the limiting beliefs behind them, in the current life. That makes the job a lot easier.

3) You aren't a slave to your subconscious mind. You have the ability to consciously access any limiting beliefs, and change them.

4) Since beliefs are just decisions, it is always possible to create a new belief. This new pattern of thought creates new possibilities and potentials in your life.

SECTION 3

Life Applications

When you desire your life to change, recognize that you are sitting primarily at A, the unwanted condition, and looking at B, something desired. Understand that by desiring something different, your life will have to change, and the change that is most likely to occur will be based on the belief structure you already have activated in your consciousness. Therefore, it is likely that you will begin to experience just the opposite of what you want right away.



Understand that you couldn't have gotten to A without having beliefs that match it. A woman who never seems to be able to find the long-term relationship she wants may argue about whether her belief came first. She may say, "I never believed I couldn't find the right guy until I experienced the wrong guy over and over." One thing is for sure, however: if she continues to hold that belief nothing significant will change in her life!

In other words, the conditions of your life are dictated by you. You are not a victim. You have control, but realize that the changes you desire are probably not going to happen all at once.

Therefore, there will be a time lag between the new desire and when the things you want manifest in your life.

This idea bothers some people. “When I want something, I want it NOW!” my wife sometimes says to me. Some people do have that rare ability to simply focus exclusively on the target, and for them, positive results will appear almost immediately. For a lot of us, however, that strong new desire just reminds us of where we are. It activates a lot of beliefs that tell us that it’s difficult to move off of point A. Well, the only way to get around that is to focus more and more on B, to get inspired by B, and ignore A as much as possible even though there is no physical evidence of B yet. That’s the magic formula.

Unfortunately, there is no pill you can take or magic wand you can wave or mantra you can chant that will magically bring B to you, in the absence of your continued focus on B. The good news is that the system is designed to give you more of what you’re focusing on.

Some might call this idea of focusing on B, when the reality is A, delusional. Well, it’s not. It’s the creative process. Every person has one. Life itself is a creative process.¹

An artist or a businessman or a Joe Sixpack all have goals. Those goals may be widely divergent, but the process for attaining them is the same. In order to get to the goal you have

¹ For an excellent description of the mechanics of the creative process, see Robert Fritz’s book “The Path of Least Resistance.”

to keep creating it in your mind, in order to put it into the physical universe. Delusion only occurs when you look at red and call it yellow. If you want yellow and you have red, then you better find a way to get your attention off of red!

The good news is that B is something you really want. And so it's a lot easier to pay attention to B than it is to A. If you're driving an old junker and want a new car, it sure is more fun to think about the new car than the one you have. The problem is, you're driving the junker, so every time you get in it, it reminds you of where you are, still stuck at A. Nevertheless, the most important step is to realign your thoughts toward B. How do you get new thoughts about B when reality constantly screams A? Well, if you have been raised to believe that money is hard to come by, and if you drive a beat up car and live in a crummy apartment, saying "Abracadabra I want a million bucks" isn't going to work for you. Even though you SAY you want to be rich, you really BELIEVE you can't be.

The way to get new beliefs is to simply change your focus from A to B. People don't believe that it's that simple, but it is. A change of focus will lead to new ideas, and new actions. If you want to change but find yourself thinking the same old thoughts, then you're not getting anywhere! It might be pretty hard at first, because your life is at A, and you have an ingrained habit of thinking about A. What most people do, instead of creating B, is bitch about A. Complaining actually gives you some relief, but it also continues to activate the same old thought patterns that

brought you to A in the first place. That's why complaining about something almost never changes the situation for the better. You may move to another town, but you'll still find a dead-end job. You may break up with your boyfriend, but the next one you get will be similar. It's almost like living in the Twilight Zone -- your life changes, but looks eerily similar. "The more things change, the more they remain the same" just describes a person who can't, or won't, take his or her attention off of A for a long enough time to create something better.

Here's something important: You may not be able to get your new car right away, but you can always feel better right away.

"What good does it do to feel good about an old junker?" you might say.

Well, it comes down to whether you would rather feel bad or good. That's the fundamental decision regarding any area of life. Even if you never got that new car, would you rather drive around feeling miserable, or cheerful?

If you are the kind of person who likes to feel miserable, then your situation will never fundamentally change. The next car you get will probably be a used one. But if the rich truly do get richer and the poor truly do get poorer, then being miserable will just lead to more misery. Remember, change is built into the universe. You're either going toward A or B. The only way to get to B is to look at B! Otherwise it's like driving your car while looking into the rear view mirror. You might get somewhere, but

it's not going to be the correct destination. And you'll probably crash a lot during the journey.

Attention to the good stuff must, inevitably, bring good things into your life. The rapidity at which this happens is ultimately determined by the mix of your thoughts and beliefs. And you have control over that.

Guidelines and Tips

1) When you begin to change your condition, realize that you are probably going to have a few negative outcomes at first. Instead of despairing, understand that you're actually on the right track! Counter-intuitively, and illogically, a negative outcome doesn't mean your positive intentions are going haywire. You have been stuck in the bog, and now you're necessarily making a bit of a mess getting out. So what! Celebrate your mess and deal with it with your new attitude. You'll be surprised at the results you get. What is occurring is that you are hitting all of the roadblocks you've placed in your own way, generated by your previous beliefs and actions. If you've been nasty to your family in the past, it's only natural that your sister-in-law may turn against you when you begin to clean up your act. It takes a little intestinal fortitude to get past that, just as it takes more effort for a hurdler to jump over the barrier than it does to run along the flat track. But the hurdler already has momentum going, so it's a lot easier to get over the

jump. And so it is for you, after you've committed yourself to positive change.

2) The positive is more powerful than the negative.

Therefore, a positive resolution will inevitably overcome all obstacles, as long as you don't give up! Whenever you encounter something that seems to be negative, laugh. Lighten up. Look at the event as an opportunity to continue along the positive path you've started. Eventually, if you keep your eyes on the goal, you MUST get out of the bog and onto dry land, where the walking is much easier.

The negative is just an absence of the positive, just as a dark room is dark because it has no light. There is no source of darkness, or negativity. The bad stuff gets its energy from the creative energy of life, which is positive!

Exercise

1) On a piece of paper, write down something you want to change in your life, and your current situation. Next, write down all the thoughts that occur to you about the situation as they come, without censoring. Don't b.s. yourself, or try to make yourself look good, just list the thoughts as they come up. If you are honest with yourself, you may be shocked at what you've written. You'll find that the list of your thoughts and beliefs precisely matches your current condition.

2) Note the position of your thoughts on the scale of emotion in the Appendix. Are they in the negative or the positive range (above or below the dotted line)?

3) Get the idea that the thoughts you've written down are the cause of your condition, not the result. This may be hard at first, because many of us have been taught that reality must always determine our attitude toward it. However, those of us who wish to positively create our reality instinctively understand the power of our own thoughts and beliefs. You wouldn't be reading this if you didn't! Understand that you are not a biological automaton, mindlessly responding to stimuli from the environment. You are, in fact, an eternal spirit having a temporary physical experience; a powerful, creative being who has the ability to consciously change your life.

4) Next, write down the positive reality you wish to create. Now that you've recognized the limiting beliefs that are holding you back, this should be a lot easier.

5) Replace those old limiting beliefs with some new ones that match the reality you want to create. Steps 4) and 5) are the most crucial in the exercise, and the most fun, because you've eliminated the reasons why you can't accomplish your goal.

What you're doing with this exercise is learning to think creatively and positively in every area of your life.

Summary

All hell breaks loose in life when you have a strong desire for change, which then activates old beliefs that are no longer serving you. Because your thoughts and beliefs determine how you feel and how others react to you, you begin to experience the opposite of what you intended.

The solution is to keep your eyes on the prize, riding out the unwanted manifestations and recognizing that they are perfectly natural and temporary, IF you keep your focus on what you want.

The End

APPENDIX

The Scale of Emotions (from lowest to highest)

Note: The dotted line represents the border between negative and positive emotion.

Emotion	Attitude
Apathy	"I give up."
Grief	
Propitiation	"I'll do anything to make it up to you!"
Sympathy	"I feel your pain."
Fear	
Anxiety	
Hidden Hostility	He's smiling in your face and stabbing you in the back. Says one thing and does another.
Callousness	"Tough for you. Just do it."
Anger	Out of control, lashing out at the world.
Antagonism	"Hey! Come over here and let me kick your butt!" Feistiness.
Boredom/ Complacency	"Things are OK, I guess."

Conservatism	"Things are fine just the way they are."
Interest	"That's cool!"
Enthusiasm	"Wow! Let's do that again!"
Exhilaration	"I feel fantastic!!!!!"
Serenity/bliss	Complete connection to Source, or God force, or life-force energy.

Adapted From: "Beyond Psychology: An Introduction to Metapsychology" by Frank A. Gerbode, M.D.