We tend to think of Yin and Yang as a dualistic pairing of opposites, rather than a dynamic interdependent state of being. In the symbology of Yin and Yang, each contains a small component of the other and as one rises, the other diminishes. The only constant here is the dynamic nature of the pairing, which has some interesting implications in the ways in which we approach life.

I realize that I may not have lived an all-encompassing existence, but I would have to say that I don’t believe I have ever met anyone who was free of trauma in some form. For some of us it might be physical, for some emotional, psychological, social or environmental...or some combination thereof, but it has been my experience of life that we all know trauma in some way, shape or form. It is part of the human condition. Not one of us seems to be immune from suffering. On the other hand, that does not mean to imply that trauma, and/or suffering must define human existence.

By definition, trauma could be seen to be anything that perturbs us away from an ideal state of well-being. The thing of it is though, we can be so perturbed, so often and for so long, that we begin to identify with the condition of dis-ease, and think in terms of its presence rather than thinking and acting in terms of well-being. As an example, it is interesting to me how often we talk about deconstructing illness, and rarely use the opposite term of reconstructing wellness, although that is the intent of the process.

What I am talking about here is how we habituate and focus our attention around our perceptions of reality. If we say that we are in pain, then we are aware of the pain, we are not aware of the absence of pain, merely its presence in the moment. Similarly, if we are stressed out by our jobs, we are aware of the stress, we are not aware of what stress-free feels like...in the moment. Ongoing stress and trauma can mould our behaviors and become our habitual response to living.

I am reminded of the comment that those things upon which we focus will grow in our lives. So what would you like to have growing in your life?

“...and when you call out the name of God, it echoes inside you.”

Morihei Ueshiba

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knowledge of what pain-free might look and feel like. If this is pain...then by default non-pain is not this!
From the perspective of release then, we begin to let go of our stresses by focusing on the things that are not stress...rather than the things that define stress within our worlds.
Small moments of sunlight on a cloudy day can be really welcome and we can remember what blue skies and sunbeams look and feel like...even in the midst of a thunderstorm.
So let’s get practical.
Suppose that there is trauma (stress) of some kind in my life. I have options:
- I can identify with it.
- I can become defined by it.
- I can ignore and/or deny it.
- I can create delusions about it.
- I can build stories around it.
- I can accept it as being inevitable.
- I can fight it.
- I can create blame around it or about it.
- I can embrace it, learn from it.
- I can look elsewhere for solutions.
- I can create habits that move me towards a state of balance and harmony.
Clearly then, I have choices. Some of my options might be more beneficial to my state of being in the world, compared to other choices. Obviously, the number of options that I can see is a function of my level of personal awareness.
It is possible then, that even if I can see all of these options, I may not see all of these choices as being open and available to me.
Additionally, there is also the implication that I did not list all the available options...perhaps you can see some that I did not list...I would hope so.
So what?
Moving towards a state of well-being and harmony is about letting go. Holding on implies a focusing of energy around the thing to which we hold.
Letting go implies an opening, a release, a freedom.
Stress, pain and trauma of any kind tends to focus our attention and mobilize our resources around the event or condition...Often, with very good reason. At the same time therefore, traumatic events draw our resources away from other areas of our lives. The result can become a stagnant point in our lives.
I had a client recently who brought this idea home to me in a very powerful way. She spoke about being aware of pain and then, instead of focusing on the location of the pain, she focused on a sensation of ‘smooth’, and the pain lost its hold on her body. I have seen similar effects in my own life, in the emotional as well as the physical realm.
When I focus on an event that I perceive as having a negative consequence in my life, it can quickly gain ascendancy and just as quickly undermine my equanimity. When I let the negative thoughts and emotions go and embrace a sense of gratitude for all the wonderful gifts in my life, the mood changes. Another really simple example for me has been given to me by being in school...when tests loom large on my radar, I have two choices and have embraced both during the last four years. I can either focus on what I don’t know, or I can focus on what I do know and build from there...
Guess which one produces the better results in my world?
Please understand this is not about avoidance, or wishful thinking. It is about intention and focus. It is about becoming aware of a pattern and then acting to change it in a very clear and deliberate fashion.
Letting something go, is a very deliberate choice. Embracing something is also a very deliberate choice.
Wisdom lies in the ability to discern which of the two is the appropriate path, given the circumstances...but that’s another article.

“Just remain in the center, watching. And then forget that you are there”

Lao Tzu from the Hua Hu Ching
Guess what...it’s a different article 😊

Make a different choice...seems so simple right?
I mean, really, if I could I would. Or at least that’s the logic we use to sustain a position.

As synchronicity is a big part of my life, following on the heels of the last article, I was teaching my Taiji class this morning when one of my students gave me a gift. He was talking about theater classes and one of the lines his teacher used to use.

There is so much power inherent in his teacher’s simple invitation: “Make a different choice.” There is power here for creating and living an intentional life.

There are several steps hidden within the statement though:

1. We become aware that our choices are creating effects in life...in simple terms we are becoming aware of the proximal cause of some effect in our lives.
2. We recognize that the effect is not exactly getting us where we want to be in life. There is a disconnect between what we say we want and what we are generating by our actions. We are in fact the source of that disconnect.
3. We recognize that the effect is a direct function of our decisions, actions, thoughts and feelings. We take personal responsibility for the outcomes that are occurring in our lives.
4. We recognize that continuing the same sets of actions will not change the outcome. We can see that it is time for a change, time to embrace something new...a paradigm shift perhaps.

5. **We make a different choice, with the deliberate intention of creating a different outcome.** We recognize that we are the architects of our own lives and the arbiter of the decision-making process.
6. We evaluate the effects generated by our new choice in light of whether it gets us closer to our intended goal or further away.
7. As a corollary to #6, we can consider whether the intended goal is in congruence with our value set. And, by extension, therefore, whether we are living a life of integrity in accordance with our true values.
8. Since we are now acting from a position of awareness (or at the very least increased awareness), we can skip step one and re-enter the process with an evaluation of step 2.
9. Repeat as necessary.

Ultimately, it gets me closer to living in the present moment, aware that my actions create outcomes...some of which may not be the ones that I intended. Of course, this does rather presuppose that I had some intended outcome in mind at the get-go, but for now, let’s assume that this is case.

Making a different choice also implies that we are, in fact, works in progress, rather than hunks of granite, rigidly bound to immutable patterns of behavior.

But, perhaps that too is a choice.

Making a different choice is about having the flexibility to embrace change, which itself emerges from a willingness to see that there are indeed no mistakes, merely learning opportunities...but again, that too is a choice.

Lastly, at least from my current perspective, making a different choice is about humility coupled with wisdom. Humility gently reminds us that we are not all-knowing, all-seeing creatures. Humility gives us the freedom to take new paths in life and embrace their offerings with passion.

Humility also invites wisdom to emerge in our lives. Wisdom is, after all, the ability to learn from our experiences.

Making a different choice, could in fact be seen as a step on the road to wisdom.

Lastly, making a different choice is acknowledging that we inhabit highly complex system in which small changes can create entirely unseen outcomes.

Making a different choice, is about walking gently through life, cognizant of the effects of our words and actions. It is about living with the intent of enhancing harmony in both the inner and outer environments.

So how are you doing?

What different choices would you like to make this week? 😊

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**“Technique employs four qualities that reflect the nature of our world. Depending upon circumstances, you should be: Hard as a diamond, flexible as a willow, smooth-flowing like water, or empty as space.”**

*Morihei Ueshiba*
In Transition?

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