

Pathways

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“You’ll break the worry habit on the day that you decide you can meet and master the worst that can happen to you”

Arnold Glasgow

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What if every thought were an action?

So I was sitting the other night, doing some inner work and I was thinking about the idea that before every action is a storm of thoughts and emotions.

We all know this...we all have hopes, dreams, desires, compulsions, plans, fears...what are they, if not emotion-based thoughts? How do they affect us moment-to-moment and day-to-day? What is more, how do they get carved into our hearts and minds as the ways in which we behave, the way we are? How much do they become the fabric of our existence, our ingrained patterns of seeing the world and moving through it?

From this perspective then, every thought **is** an action, but it is an action in the mind. In truth it is an action of intention manifested as a mental image of my inner world that affects how I manifest what occurs in my outer world. What I think affects what I feel and vice versa in a positive feedback loop. Moreover, what I feel has a physical manifestation in my body, for instance we might feel muscular pain, a tightness in the throat or the chest, or poor digestion, or a sense of calm and well-being in the body....all according to how our emotions affect our hormonal balance.

So here’s the core issue...how much do I control what I think and how much do I just go along with the flow of thoughts as though I were not the master of my own mental boat? I

could run with that metaphor...like am I master of the Mayflower headed to new lands, or the Titanic, unaware that I am headed somewhere else entirely. Am I master of the Victory built specifically for conflict? Am I master of the Gypsy Moth IV, circumnavigating the globe.

OK let’s leave the metaphor aside, I’m sure you get the idea.

My main point today is to rein in some of the monkey mind by becoming aware of who is actually at work during the thinking process.

One of the exercises I do with my clients is to look at the Board of Directors...this exercise looks at who it is who is running your life and whose voices gain ascendancy during your day.

Most of us know the voice of the inner child and the inner critic. Most of us also know (to some extent at least) the voice of the higher self. The real question that emerges is to what extent do the voices of your mental Board of Directors affect what and how you think, and therefore exert a force on how you behave in the world.

Thoughts carry power, especially when they are driven by strong emotion. Thoughts can enable or undermine us, empower or debilitate us.

These same thoughts will therefore affect the intentions of our actions...the reasons we have for doing the things we do. For instance am I

What if our thoughts...

kind because I am a kind person, or because I stand to get something from it that I want?

O.K., to a degree I will grant you that to an extent we all work from the latter position of self-interest. We all seek pleasure to some extent, but it doesn't alter my main point.

If I am kind because I am motivated by the notion of doing no harm either to self or other, then I am acting from a very specific intention and my results will reflect the intention that preceded the action.

If, on the other hand, I am being kind because I stand to gain something, regardless of the outcome for you, then I would argue that I am acting with a semblance of kindness, but in reality my intention is something very different.

Both actions will be preceded by a series of emotion-laced thoughts that will inspire (breathe life into) and motivate (cause to move) my actions. Both actions, while superficially similar are, however, motivated by radically different intentions. To the extent that my actions are based upon the desire to do good and to do no harm, my actions might be considered skillful, or be based upon a virtuous intent.

From this perspective then, if I am acting in kindness because I stand to gain something from the act, how will it color what I think you are do-

ing when you are kind to me? Now try the other perspective. If I act in kindness because I truly wish to do no harm, or better yet, wish to do you good *for its own sake*, what will I think when you show me kindness? And all of this evolves from what I think *before* I act.

Now here's where the rubber really hits the road. Take both of the different scenarios I have painted for you, and tell me who is living a stressful life and who has a life of well-being?

Take it one step further. Who is creating my stress? Who is the architect of my world?

So it comes to this: I am creating a good deal of my own stress because of the intentions I set in my patterns of thought, before I make any overt action in the world. Moreover, I have built these patterns of thought process from years of positive feedback...after all we tend to see what we are looking for and find what we seek...regardless of what is actually there.

So clearly then, I have trained my mind over the years to repeat patterns from which I derive some benefit. If I didn't derive benefit I'd do something different. All of which goes to one of my coaching rules: We are all doing the best that we can with what we have in the moment. Put another way, if I could make a better choice,

I would. So the degree to which I am unable to make a better choice is the degree to which I am unable to see options. Ultimately then, it all comes down to ignorance...not ignorance in the sense of stupid or dumb, but ignorance in the sense of not knowing. Bring it back to focus again: If I can see a better choice I will take it.

Think about a race car on a track. I can either see the curve ahead or the wall in front of me. If my intention is set on cornering, I will be looking into the curve, if I'm afraid of hitting the wall, I will be looking at the wall getting closer, *not the corner*. If I know how to overcome my fear of the wall and look into the bend, then I will skillfully, successfully corner. If I am crippled by my fear I will want to corner, but be unable to steer into anything other than the wall.

Isn't that curious?

So, to wrap this up then, the Board of Directors will all be speaking to you with different voices. Some of those voices will gain control of the Board at different times, and create emotion-based intentions that will lead to actions and create outcomes.

So who is sailing your boat or driving your race car? How well are they doing at the helm or the wheel?

Are you happy with the results? Wanna make any changes to your BoD? ☺

***“Fear not for the future,
Weep not for the past”***

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Anger & Compassion

Interestingly, anger has come up for me in a variety of settings recently. It is not typically something that I would think to write about, but somehow, it seems apt.

Recently I have been asked why some event did not make me angry, or I was asked "Aren't you angry about that?" Additionally I have had people ask me one of two questions: "Are you angry at me?" or "Why aren't you angry at me?"

Curiously, I even had one person get mildly angry at me for not being angry about an event that occurred to both of us!

So here's my take on angry.

I can do angry, I can do it really well if I have a mind to do so, but what does it get me? There have been times in the past when I have been literally shaking with rage. But what did it get me?

I was hiking up to the top of Enchanted Rock here in Texas this afternoon, musing over what it meant to be angry.

In almost every circumstance that I can recall, when I got angry I later regretted it. Invariably I had missed some vital piece of information, some viewpoint that would have changed my perspective on the situation.

I can think of only one instance in my life when I got angry and did not later regret it, and that had to do with a child being attacked by a stranger in a park in London. I was recovering from a motorbike accident and still on crutches with my arm in a sling when I witnessed a little girl get attacked by a total stranger. I leapt into action to protect the child, and went shouting downhill towards the girl and the attacker, who fled.

In that moment, anger was the right emotion and led to the right action for the right reasons.

So very rarely, however, is that the case.

Invariably, anger is about me being right and you being wrong. Invariably once anger comes to the forefront, reason takes a back seat, cold, righteous indignation takes its place and the blinders go on. I'm right, you're wrong and I'm entitled to be angry about it and...just to make sure that you understand...here is my anger focused entirely upon you.

Recently, however I have been thinking that anger is a dead end path, or at best, a resting station on the path to compassion.

Yes, that's what I said...compassion.

When I feel anger rise in me, increasingly my natural response (yes, natural) is to stop myself and ask myself what it is that I'm missing.

More often than not, when I contain my anger, and let it point me in the direction of information or perspectives that I am missing, the anger gives way to compassion.

Of course it's all a balancing act.

Anger is a natural response to an event. It is also a programmed response to specific types of stimuli. Things that make me angry, might not affect you in the same way at all. We all have different triggers. But what happens when I stop at anger, gas up and mash down on the throttle? Potential car wreck, that's what.

So, if anger is a natural enough response in each of us to specific triggers, what can we do about it?

Well obviously the first thing is to see it for what it is as it rises. What events trigger you to anger? What is it about those events that trigger you? And...here's the rub: What is it that makes you oh so right in those moments? What would happen if you were to stop for a moment and ask yourself what you are missing? What is it that you do not see right now, that would

change your emotional response?

Now here's the real kicker for me...and it take superhuman effort at times. When I feel anger rise in me, I ask myself what it would take to change the anger to compassion. If nothing else that single question throws my brain and liver into a tail spin for a few nanoseconds, which is all it takes to allow in some new data points and invite a change of perspective.

The beauty of it all, is that it works for the past too. All those grudges that we carry, those past wrongs can all be put aside when we look at them from the perspective of compassion. And before you leap all over me here with cases where that's not true, I will simply ask you to reflect on it and see what comes up for you. Note something important here, I'm not saying forgive and forget. I'm saying view the same event from the position of compassion...what changes for you?

So what exactly is this thing I am calling compassion? What is its great gift? Compassion is an act of mercy in its simplest sense. So instead of giving you anger, I show you mercy? Hmm...curious. How about instead of reflecting anger to the world, I reflect mercy? What if the anger is turned back on me? What then? What if the mercy is turned back onto me...what then?

Compassion to me is not just about mercy, it is about an authentic intention to act with living kindness, understanding, acceptance, and therefore a willingness to acknowledge that I'm not all-knowing or all-seeing. Lastly, therefore, compassion is about standing in *your* shoes for a moment and looking through *your* eyes. Here is a path to empathy...but that's another article completely.

<http://bizdoc.us/diffuse-conflict-with-conversational-martial-arts/>

Chris Blanton

What's the point of Coaching?

Coaching is about learning from the experiences of yesterday, planning for our successful tomorrows, playing the game of life full-out, with passion, and living fully present, in a larger, more vibrant NOW!



For a 10% discount on a three-month coaching package
contact Chris at:
662 769 5522
or send an e-mail to: chris@thirdpathway.com