

Chapter 15 Happiness, and Health, and Positive Psychology

Heavy thoughts bring on physical maladies

Martin Luther
1483-1546

As a confirmed melancholic, I can testify that the best and maybe the only antidote for melancholia is action. However, like most melancholics, I suffer from sloth.

Edward Abbey

“Every affection of the mind that is attended with either pain or pleasure, hope or fear, is the cause of an agitation whose influence extends to the heart... And hence, by the way, it may perchance be wherefore grief, and love, and envy, and anxiety, and all affections of the mind of a similar id are accompanied with emaciation and decay, or with cachucha and crudity, which engender all manner of disease and consume the body of man.”

In 1649 he says of a case of heart disease: “I was acquainted with a strong man, who having received an injury and affront from one more powerful than himself, and upon whom he could not have his revenge, was so overcome with hatred and spite and passion, which he yet communicated to no one, that at last he fell into a strange distemper, suffering from extreme oppression and pain of the heart and breast, and the prescriptions of none of the very best physicians proving of any avail, he fell in the course of a few years into a scorbutic and cachectic state, became rabid and died” (p. 96).*

quote from

*William Harvey, *De Motu Cordis* (1628)

Quoted in

The History of Psychiatry by Franz Alexander and Sheldon Selesnick.

How sad it is that people can be so brutal, so uncaring of their fellow man. How sad it is as well, that we take a slight so seriously, so to heart that it literally causes the heart to become diseased and die.

Egopaths do not care about your happiness. They have lost the ability to be concerned about how their words destroy your peace of mind and your equanimity of spirit. All they know is hate and disgust. Let’s begin with an organization of happiness. I have divided all the happinesses into four categories. My wish for you, dear reader, is that you have an abundance of all four of these happinesses.

The Four Happinesses Circle

4. Spiritual Depth	1. Mensorium (A&P) A great feeling of focus and excitement about getting some project accomplished that leads to self-actualization. Able to have “flow” as we work with focused, satisfying concentration. (Accomplishment & Productivity) (John)	2. Relationships, Frivolity and Mirth with friends
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<p>Golden, Magical, Mellifluous, Melancholy Mystical Mood. Feeling connected to the universe and close to God or All Holy Spirit. Includes “Moments of Awe,” “Power of Now,” meditative, contemplative bliss. The happiness of a beautiful dream. Awe & Depth (A & D) (George)</p>	<p>The core of our souls is made to be healthy if we have these happinesses in our hearts.</p> <p>3. Deep Happiness</p>	<p>I love my friends. They are so fun. When we got together we would laugh and talk and have the best time. My family is so warm and supportive of me. I feel great when I’m with them. Being in love is one of the most beautiful of happinesses. (Affiliation & Love) (Ringo)</p>
	<p>Deeply sweet feeling of contentedness and happiness. Phrases like “Today is so beautiful,” “I am so lucky/blessed,” “I have such a great life,” “My life is so good.” “I am so lucky/blessed to have this life. This life is so wonderful.” “I am so happy,” pop into our heads. (Paul) (A & E) (Appreciative & Excitement)</p>	

Figure 16. Egoopathy robs us of our four happinesses.

As we are bullied and mistreated we tend to slip into the lower forms of all four of the happinesses.

1. Mensorium, we slip more and more into the obsessive, exacting, compulsive, manic type of being productive. Perfectionistic. Or we slip into disarray and loss of mental focus.
2. We tend to slip more into the manic type of laughter, obsessive type of seeking fun staying in it too long and using mood-altering substances to enhance it.
3. We tend to slip into doing things that bring us pleasure. It feels so good to watch our TV, see movies, listen to our music, putter in our lovely houses, peruse our favorite author and even daydream about how lovely our lives and families are.
4. We tend to invest too much in saintly and religious things, we spend too much time contemplating God’s green earth and His perfect heaven. We spend too much time pouring over the Bible or Torah or Koran digesting God’s great secrets and admonitions. We spend too much time dwelling on and delving into the sanctities and acrimonies of this earthly and yet heavenly existence. We develop ways of understanding relationships which are laced with contaminated by dogmas and dictums.

As you can see, this is a very slippery slope I’ve stumbled upon. Obviously I have included each one of these realms because they are all such wonderful sources and expressions of healthy and saintly happiness. The thing to avoid is the “over doing” of each of the four happinesses. My focus here is on how we are affected growing up with, being married to, or working for an egoopath who pushes us into these extremes. I am not here to judge you if you go to some of these extremes. I am here to be understanding and to encourage you to seek counseling so that you can come to see that each one of these tendencies, healthy and satisfying though they may be in moderation, are potentially roads to unhealthy relationships and disappointing lives.

Let me put to rest the free will controversy once and for all. We have free will to choose in the moment but our impulses, drives, instincts, compulsions, obsessions, and pleasures are so imbued with and contaminated by our experiences and memories, both conscious and subconscious, that we cannot say we stand as rock islands making uninfluenced “free” choices. That is the nature of the

human mind.

Mensorium

Each one of us has a mensorium score whether we know or not. Each one of us is experiencing a state or level of motivation concerning the tasks in our lives. These "tasks" could be simple such as brushing our teeth or emptying the trash, or it could be something more profound such as writing a letter to our aunt or even doing a business report. We all feel some sense of motivation to accomplish our daily tasks, that is, if we are not depressed. The depressed person most likely has lost all sense of motivation to maintain personal hygiene and perform the activities of daily living (ADL's.) What is so often missed with depressed people is that they have lost their mensorium due to the fact that at some time in their lives a significant person, their parents or a teacher, engaged in judging and criticizing them so much so that the person was significantly affected by the dystreatment. This part of our psyche, which strives to become the most highly productive person we can be, I call the mensorium. If we are at a Level One we are lying in bed asleep or just in a drowsy state of mind. There is nothing wrong with this state of mind; we all need our rest. But if we begin to spend too much time lying down, then we are exhibiting a mild state of depression which is always characterized by a lack of mental productivity.

Ten Levels of Mensorium

- Level 1: Sleeping, resting, staring into space
- Level 2: Awake and mulling over something in our minds, daydreaming productively
- Level 3: Up but doing simple things slowly, reading a magazine, chatting on the phone
- Level 4: Being motivated to work on a hobby or special interest, avocational
- Level 5: Being motivated to read or write or think about a professional concern
- Level 6: Getting things done but in a semi-chaotic or slow manner
- Level 7: Trucking along with medium productivity; a normal day of work due to the structure in our day
- Level 8: Being productive but without higher order mental focus and organization
- Level 9: Being very productive but without a higher order mood of achievement, "flow"
- Level 10: Having an ecstatic or super concentrating experience of productivity infused with the wonderful sense of achievement. The mind is in a supreme organized mode. SuperFlow.

The Third Happiness

There are words which describe mental emotional constructs which are part and parcel of happiness. One such word is "appreciation." When we are happy we are able to appreciate the good things of life. We are filled with the mental/emotional thought of "My life is so great. My family is so wonderful. I appreciate my job so much. The day is so beautiful. The sun feels so nice and warm. The breeze is so cool. Oh, how nice this lovely day feels." These thoughts are the stuff of happiness. They are so important for creating a sense of well-being in our lives. And yet, the daily experience of being mistreated by an egopath destroys these building blocks of a happy and healthy life.

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.
George Carlin

In 2000, I presented on the Columbine tragedy at Texas Psychological Association. I wanted to help the psychologists of Texas understand the etiology of school shootings.

I think our agenda and mandate as psychologists and mental health professionals, is to:

1. Understand the etiology and dynamics of egopathic abreaction
2. Assess our children to see how they are doing, identifying the ones who are at-risk

3. Tracking them: Managing the young people in our schools
4. Educating our children in mental health concepts so they can continue areas One through Three on their own!
5. Implementing the steps One through Four. That's done through this Crest Class or an extended version of the p.a.p.a. program.

A Case Example of Faculty Acting Out

At the new faculty orientation, I asked a faculty member, who I did not know, about which class was using the Emotional Brain by Joseph LeDoux. The person sitting there answered back **nonchalantly** without considering my interest. My new supervisor was standing there and her immediate answer was "That is part of the Psy.D program." And turned to the **nonchalant** professor and said, "that's part of the Psy.D. program right?" She **noded** her head very disinterested. Dr. H turns back to me, "yeah, that's part of the Psy.D. program." I immediately sensed something was wrong with this exchange. Why had she said anything about what program it was in? Yes, I was not teaching in the Psy.D. program, that's true, but that had nothing to do with my interest in the book and its subject **matter**. Why had she immediately made a point of that? It hurt me because it seemed to me she was saying, "That **book** is not used in the program you're teaching in. You should not be interested in that book because you cannot teach that class." My point here is that her immediate, split second reaction to the question was one of judgment. She was lightning fast to *judge* that I was not worthy of interest in that book. That is the egopathic way of reacting. The **altruCharacteristic** way of reacting would be to have spent 30 seconds asking about my interest in the book. I would have said that I have that book and I walked and talked with Joseph LeDoux at APA in August, 2006. But she didn't get to hear that comment because she didn't show an interest in my point of view. She laid her 'map' on my 'territory.' She focused on her perceptions and her need for power, control, and direction. (PCD).

EGOPATHY DESTROYS EMOTIONAL HEALTH

There are four types of emotional health as we saw in the section on happiness. One of the most glorious types of happiness is the passion of mensorial spirit. Mensorial spirit is the deeply felt emotional drive toward accomplishing a goal. In his book Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman says, "To the degree we are motivated by feelings of enthusiasm and pleasure in what we do ... they propel us to accomplishment. It is in this sense that emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them."

We see this spirit most dramatically in sports. The tournament-winning cross court slam, the tie breaking run into the end zone, the three-pointer to win the play-offs, the home-run to win the series. These are the stuff of testosterone dreams. They give life and passion to our lives because these are the expressions of (and triggers of) powerful emotions lodged deep in the brain.

But there are more situations in which we are motivated than sports. Any human endeavor can be an expression of this same drive for excellence, accomplishment, and achievement. It starts with the simplest game of cards, a board game, or a video game. The child strives to win the game and feels a rush of excitement when he or she scores a win or achieves a new personal best. This striving, winning, and feeling good is a part, or should be a part, of every child's life. (See the section on the roots of disempathy for a more complete explanation of the connection with egopathy.)

But this drive toward excellence and achievement is not a hardy, genetically driven developmental process. It is fragile. It can be thrown off track. "Resilience" is a trait that we cherish and pray for in our children. And children *can* be resilient according to their genetic make-up *early on in their lives*. But as time goes by the child begins to have a developmental history of either augmented ego strength or, if there is abuse (or trauncil), a history of diminished ego strength.

As children experience "trauncil" they slowly lose the ability to be resilient and lose their natural drive toward accomplishing success. They slip into a malaise and inner boredom that I used to call

“disteleosis.” * I then had to invent the word “mensorium” to describe this mental amalgam of constructs which means the will and drive to envision and follow through with a project. It may be an art project, graduate school, an invention or an Initial Public Offering. Men and women who conceive, create, and carry through their projects are men and women of high mensorium.

Egopaths love to say, “Pull yourself up by your boot straps and get to work.” But most of us can only change our mood by about 10%. Our abuse and neglect (trauncil) history is a powerful limiter of our ability to think positively and make ourselves feel better. There is a “glass ceiling” through which we can imagine ourselves being happy but no matter what we do we can seldom “think” our way into a happier mood.

Here is a diagram.



In Minirth’s book, “Happiness is a Choice,” he is not saying you can just *choose* to be happy. He is saying you can choose to do the work of therapy and involvement which will lead to happiness. Research shows that happiness levels do not change dramatically over time. Evidently, our children are pretty much stuck with their potential of happiness that their childhood experiences have left them with. If you are a parent, I hope you will take this to heart and do everything you can to provide your child with a happy childhood experience.

If a person has a happy childhood experience, that person is heir to great passion and many deeply meaningful moments. Each person has to define “deeply meaningful moments” for themselves. Some happy people never have deep and meaningful moments. Some unhappy people have many deep and meaningful moments, so there is not an exact correlation with happiness. But I can say this, unhappy people who don’t have deep, meaningful moments are unhappy indeed. It is the theme and purpose of this book to drive home the concept that egopathic parents and other tyrants rob children and, by extension, grandchildren of their deep happiness and meaningful lives by acting out their egopathic impulses.

Egopathic treatment coming from a parent, a spouse, a boss, a professor, or a coworker destroys this most glorious of happinesses. The mensorial passion is the stuff of a successful life. Without it a young person lingers and languishes in indecision, disinterest, poor motivation, and exasperating resistance to getting up and getting out into the world of work and education. They focus all their attention on video games, friends, cruising, and horsing around. Eventually, without intervention, they move into drug usage and even gangs and criminal activities.

To avoid confusing hyperbole, let’s examine the word “destroy.” This destructive force is not equally distributed across situations. When there is mensorial destruction to a forty-year-old it is a less severe experience than the “destroy” of an 8 year old. When an eight year old has his or her mensorium “destroyed” it is a change in brain structure that will haunt and diminish this child for the rest of his/her life. When we use the word “destroy” for a grown adult it is, hopefully, a more temporary form of destructiveness. But “destroy” is still the correct word because of its connotation of devastating affect on the adult.

However, it is not always temporary, depending on the childhood experience. There was a patient of mine who will remain anonymous. We’ll call her Lydia. She was overweight and extremely depressed. She had had an abusive childhood with no solid attachment to a loving adult. After years of depression, she became a recipient of government funds and supervision by the local MHMR system. This system worked so well that she began to flourish. She was even hired as an assistant in the MHMR center. There was a contest of some kind which she and one of her mental health professional supervisors won! The award was a trip to Disneyland. For most of us this would have been a time of real joy and exuberant triumph. But the happiness was short-lived for this overweight woman. Her mental illness began to raise

its ugly head and she began to be fearful about spending so much time, one on one, with this supervisor and all the other vicissitudes of travel by plane to a distant city. She just couldn't do it. She had to back out of the trip.

Lydia's refusal to go on the trip aggravated and upset this trusted advisor, the mental health professional with whom she had won the award. So, in retribution, the mental health professional began to turn her back on Lydia. She was no longer supportive. Lydia began to get seriously depressed again and lost her job at the center. She ended up a few years later in my groups at a mental health clinic. We tried to do what we could to bring her out of her depression. After two or three weeks she got better and was discharged. A month later she killed herself.

I felt bad about Lydia. I would have liked to have had a deeper impact on her brain chemistry. But it was too late. All the childhood abuse combined with the rejective egopathy of the supervisor was too much for Lydia and she had to check out. I am sorry, Lydia. I wish I could have done more for you.

Back to our scenario. You are sitting between an egopathic boss and an HR person or a VP. They are both making it out to seem like you are a total screw up and you know that's not the case. Here is an idea. Ask the HR person to answer a question. "Sure, I'd be glad to," they answer helpfully. Imagine that I am blue and Susan here, my boss, is green. If the conflict is all blue then that means it is completely my fault that things got out of control, that profits have diminished, that the employees are unproductive and unhappy. Now, let's say that the situation is "green." That would mean that the situation is completely Susan's fault. She has mistreated the employees, changed the schedules to meet her hidden agenda, and is now looking for a "fall guy" to blame. Here's my question, "What color is the conflict?"

The HR person might be tempted to say, "Blue" to continue laying the blame on you. The right answer, of course, is "blue-green" (teal, aqua). Most conflicts are 50/50 in nature and should be approached that way. But the HR person and your boss are laying all the blame on you. So ask them, with real concern in your voice, "Are you sure you want to "dichotomize" this situation? Are you sure you want to engage in "dichotic thinking?" When you think in terms of one person being "all bad" and another person being "all good," that is what Sigmund Freud called "splitting" and is a sign of egopathic thinking which is one step away from psychopathic thinking. Are you sure you want to show yourself to be an egopath? Almost a psychopath??"

This tactic is both clever in a silly sort of way and absolutely grounded, as well. Psychopaths view the world in very black and white terms. They have very hard "If ... then" statements in their heads. It's part of their pathology. "If you don't give me all your money, then that means you totally disrespect me and therefore you deserve to die." And they pull the trigger. We can't imagine why someone would do such a horrid thing. It is this very "black and white" thinking that causes them to feel justified in pulling the trigger and then feeling no remorse. "He deserved it. You heard what he said." But here you are in a similar situation but instead of a psychopath getting ready to pull a trigger you have an egopath getting ready to crucify you to meet his/her own hidden agenda or personal ego needs. And after the deed is done, he or she will feel as little remorse for putting you out on the streets as the psychopath will feel when he shoots his victim.

So here's your response. "If you decide to blame only me, then you are exhibiting dichotic thinking. You are revealing to me that you are an egopath. I will be letting the upper management (president, director, principal) know that you have shown yourself to be an egopath. So it would not surprise me if you ended up losing your job within the next six months. Is that okay with you or would you like to think about this decision for a couple of days?" Stand up and say, "I'll let you think about it and I'll give you a call on Tuesday, okay?" Then walk out the door. Hopefully, this will work to save you from an inappropriate termination. But keep in mind it hasn't been tried out. It's only a suggestion.

Accountability

People should be held accountable for their actions. Well-meaning people hold others accountable for their behavior. Holding people accountable for their behavior helps them become ego healthy because they stop blaming others for their misbehavior and shortcomings. Once an immature person starts holding himself accountable, he or she can begin to take steps toward sobriety and a high character life. This is true. But it is not the whole story.

“Holding people accountable for their behavior” is a favorite tack of egopaths. Why? because it lets egopaths off the hook for what they are doing to others. It is easy to tell someone who complains of this or that to stop blaming others and start owning their own shortcomings and get to work. That’s easy to do. What’s hard to do is to show empathy for how the “power up” people in their lives probably really are not acting in his or her best interest. Showing empathy and validation is a much more difficult way to deal with a complaining person. It takes a lot of character to be supportive and listen for a few minutes. It takes strength of character not to say “take responsibility” right after a complaint. Remember, Step One is to listen and validate. Step Two is to give advice and admonish.

Straining and Draining: Our happiness goes down as our blood pressure goes up

There has been very little research into how straining and draining it is to live within the egopathic management system that most of us live with everyday at work. One woman, Sylvia, who had a sweet personality and a good work ethic, recounted how she lives with stress everyday which causes her to sleep poorly. Why? Because her power up (PU) people ask her to do tasks which are really their job and would be much easier for them to do. She said if she confronted them directly, even in an Adult-Adult way, they would most likely email her supervisor and she’d be in big trouble. She felt trapped in this low character system because people in PU positions are not “held accountable” by *their* supervisors to honor and follow the Rules of Interpersonal Behavior (RIC). So those of us at the bottom and below the egopaths just suffer and there’s nothing we can do about it.

The Effects of Exposure to Egopathy: How it Affects Us Physically

1. Teeth grinding
2. Weight gain
3. Aging on our face and our bodies.
4. Stomach acid, Irritable bowel syndrome
5. Muscle Pain
6. Immune system is compromised
7. Tendons and ligaments are prone to be weakened and tear
8. Arthritis engendered or exasperated
9. Phantom pains and physical sensitivities
10. High blood pressure
11. Muscle pain and weakness
12. Injuries are slower to heal
13. Joint pain and stiffness
14. Cancer
15. Heart disease
16. Alzheimer’s disease
17. The drive to smoke, use drugs, drink
18. A general weakness or soreness in our bodies.
19. An acute attack of the above. It used to be called “neurasthenia.”
20. Back pain, and after enough years, actual back disease.

The euphemisms we use to describe the sequelae of egopathic acting out.

In one of John Bradshaw's videos he says, "The cause of death of an alcoholic is usually listed in his death certificate as 'bridge abutment.'" His point is that the death of an alcoholic is seldom listed as "years of alcoholic drinking and being drunk that night." In the same vein, the targets of egopaths seldom realize that their mental and physical illnesses are being caused by years of having an egopathic cloud hanging over their heads. The words "stress" and "conflict" and "unhappiness" and "turmoil" are used because we have not had a word that captured the person's behavior which *caused* the condition listed above. Now we do, it's called "egopathic acting out" or "chronic egopathic onslaught."