

Lesson 111: Balance & Order Thy Life

It is written in the ancient Hermetic text, The Emerald Tablets, “Balance and order thy life.” The ability to bring balance and order into every aspect of your life is not a state of mind or emotion that comes about from the illusions of wishful thinking, avoidance or denial; it comes about by intentional effort and expanded awareness. Conscious awareness is about being aware of everything that applies to you and your reality and doing so in an attitude of honesty; after all it is about balancing and ordering the quality of your life. Therefore, the balance of your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual self, as well as your cognitive processes is essential to establishing order in your life. Without balance, order cannot prevail and without order, there is no balance. Although this principle appears as two separate fundamental orders of operation, they operate within the same spiritual framework, “Through Order, ye shall find the way.” The discussion in this lesson centers on the fundamental operation of finding the way to balance and order through a process of cognitive identification, mental and emotional acceptance and conscious detachment from the inner and outer influences that cause the disorders and create the imbalances.

Finding the way to balance and order begins with the Hermetic directive to “Look in thy life for disorder.” Thus, the fundamental order of operation to finding balance and order in your life begins by examining the disorders that currently exist in your life. However, the task of examining the presence of the disorders that are adversely affecting your reality cannot occur without first recognizing that there are disorders in your life. Because an honest assessment and admission to existing disorders is essential to progressing any further, there simply is no room for denial. Be it ever so painful, honesty must prevail otherwise nothing worthwhile is accomplished and the adversely affected aspects of your reality will remain exactly as is, unbalanced and disordered.

Acting on the fundamental process of balance and order with any degree of cognitive success begins by taking notice of dysfunctional thought patterns, fueled by strong feelings and emotions, limiting or disabling beliefs and distorted perceptions that over time have turned into habitual reactive behavior patterns. All these contributing internal influences also give way to unrealistic expectations of yourself or others, which can be quite damaging, internally and externally because they too adversely affect your reality. If you choose to embark on this path of self-discovery, you may find the process of sorting fact from fiction, reality from illusion a difficult and challenging task. If at first you cannot readily identify an existing dysfunctional thought pattern, try turning the focus of your attention on a habitual behavior pattern. As you contemplate the existence of this pattern, take note of the feelings and emotions that trigger the habitual behavior. As you examine the underpinnings that support the behavior pattern, the accompanying thought pattern will emerge. The goal is to identify the pattern of emotionally reactive behavior, habitually acted on without much thought because the

thought pattern itself is already well established, thus, the act of reacting does not require a newly constructed thought process every time you react.

Although the ultimate goal is to identify the dysfunctional thought pattern, as well as the habitual reactive behavior pattern, which are the culprits contributing to a disorder in your life; it is unlikely there is only one set pattern in operation. A dysfunctional thought pattern along with its accompanying habitual reactive behavior pattern tend to operate in tandem with other not so visible or easily discernible patterns, thus where there is one set pattern, it is likely there are others attached, operating simultaneously and doing so without your awareness. Regardless of which pattern you identify first, that pattern is the map from which you begin to trace any other patterns to its root cause. The more familiar you are with the way you habitually act and react to situations, conditions, circumstances and events that arise in your reality, the easier it will be to trace the behavior pattern back its origination, which for most people traces back to an early childhood experience. Though generally attributed to actual occurring events, these experiences are often misinterpretations or distorted perceptions of events that did or did not actually occur, realistically speaking. But regardless of what really did or did not occur, these dysfunctional thought patterns along with their cohorts, the habitual reactive behavior patterns, take root in the subconscious. When left undetected, they become well-established automatic responses to any situation, condition, circumstance or event that approximates the feelings and emotions associated with a past unpleasant or undesirable experience, whether remembered or forgotten. And although you may not be consciously aware that these patterns have set in, they operate as calculated patterns of dysfunctional thinking and predictable emotionally based patterns of habitual reactive behaviors.

These self-destructive patterns not only take on a life form of their own, when repeatedly acted on these same patterns transform into set neural profiles stored in your brain, triggered by any event that resembles a real or perceived threat of like kind. When left unidentified, the energy of these mental and emotional destructive patterns leave the problem of identification, acceptance and detachment up to your psyche to contend with, which it does by way of various archetypal or symbolic smoke signals, typically disregarded, misunderstood or misinterpreted. Thus, the untraced origin of these habituated patterns is a psychological, biological and neural battle lost until correctly identified. When these patterns are not traced to their origins, both the cause and the effect multiplies over the course of time, weaving a web of additional ongoing causes and effects that adversely manifest somewhere in your reality. These adverse manifestations tend to occur in your relationships, where they wreak all sorts of unpleasant and undesirable havoc. The uncanny human need for blame and fault, erroneously pointed in the wrong direction, shields the actual disorder, which creates the imbalance and further distorts reality. Although the primary cause appears to originate within a more recent or current adult relationship, the actual cause originated

long ago, though the adverse effects mostly manifest in the domain of personal and sometimes even professional relationships. However, identification is not the end of the road. Cognitive and emotional acceptance of a situation, condition, circumstance or event that occurred in your reality, as it actually occurred, not as it was perceived, requires making a conscious choice to detach from the thought and behavior pattern that fuels the disorder. Of course, if you choose to continue acting on these patterns, you must be willing to suffer the ongoing consequences, as the fundamental operating principle of cause and effect will continue adversely manifesting in your reality.

As discernment of these patterns does not fall into a one-size fits all category and to the degree of an existing disorder, the guidance and support of a professional, pastoral or properly trained lay counselor is not only an essential ingredient in the identification process, it is a psychological safety net. Sifting through what is and what is not through the lens of subjective reality can be a daunting and confusing task, especially given that surface appearances are only a small insight into what is really going on in the deepest parts of your subconscious, which is where habitual actions and reactions activate undetected triggers. Likewise, attempting to understand the mechanics of your brain processes and the interpersonal role it plays with your mind and emotions can be a daunting task too. The brain stores neural profiles that ignite automatic responses every time it perceives an existing or non-existing threat. Because the brain does not discern between a real or perceived threat, a threat is a threat in the domain of neural activity. Thus, the brain fires off the same fight or flight response signal every single time, which puts your physical body, organs and every cell in it on red alert, sometimes releasing chemicals and hormones in spite of the fact that the chemical and biological strain on your body is needless. Too much of these hormones, such as cortisol, is dangerous to your health and overall well-being.

Clarity of mind is the antidote to tracing the internal and external destruction caused by dysfunctional thought patterns and habituated reactive behavior patterns. However, your mind cannot function properly when constantly inundated with chemicals and stress hormones raging through your body in response to undetected mental and emotional triggers. An alert state of mindfulness not only calms the stormy waters, it is crucial to detecting the triggers. One or more deep breaths can calm the mind long enough to recognize these patterns before they manifest undesirable effects, thus, it is essential to do potential or existing damage control as soon as possible. The key to becoming mindful of your own self-destructive dysfunctional thought patterns and reactionary behavior patterns lies in your ability to actually see the forest for the trees, which means identifying these debilitating patterns of thinking and behaving. They are there, but you have to make the effort to discover them. Although self-defeating behavior patterns appears out of conscious reach, buried beneath the surface of your awareness, unlike your dysfunctional thought patterns that do bury themselves in the confines of your subconscious, behavior patterns tend to lie closer to the surface of your

conscious awareness, which makes them easier to trace. Because it is easier to detect behavior patterns than it is to detect dysfunctional thought patterns, the path to detecting a deeply hidden thought pattern is by way of detecting the habituated behavior pattern first.

Habitual reactive behavior patterns are just that, they are well-established patterns of behavior that are visibly distinctive once you identify them. When you see how obvious they are, you will wonder why you had not identified them sooner. Identifying at least one pattern gives you the incentive to identify another and another until eventually you will have identified every habitual reactive behavior pattern that dictates your reality, such as your relationships or the goals you have not yet successfully achieved. However, identification of even one pattern is not typically an overnight success nor is it a one-time event. The process of identifying every pattern that is ruling your reality is just that, it is a slow and steady process. Unfortunately, the light bulb does not turn on all at once. If it were that simple, everyone would have accomplished this feat long ago. The reality is that it takes time and effort to identify self-destructive thought and behavior patterns, not because they appear hidden between discreet layers of your conscious awareness, but because identification involves a number of other factors, which requires patience, effort and above all, the utmost honesty. The latter is the most difficult because it takes far less cognitive effort to blame someone or something other than what it really is, which thwarts progress. Although identifying a dysfunctional thought pattern or a reactionary behavior pattern is often a difficult process, the signposts are leaping out in front of you all the time. Unfortunately, they too are mostly undetected and go unnoticed due to misguided assumptions and misinterpretations of reality. Perceptions are more often than not your worst enemy, as perceptual distortions of reality fall prey to subjective interpretations, which can drastically misrepresent reality, cause a disorder and create an imbalance in your psyche and in your reality. No matter how clearly you think you are interpreting reality, you can be sure there is another version of that reality on the backside of the same coin. Thus, the lens you look through, whether by habit, conditioning or simply by choice, determines the picture you will inevitably see.

Identifying a destructive behavior pattern is not a one-time event because it takes time to understand where and how these patterns have been operating in your reality, which means identifying the internal common threads that weave through these patterns, stitching one or more thought pattern to its accompanying behavior patterns. Identifying the common threads enables you to halt destructive behavior patterns long enough to explore the thoughts, feelings, emotions and beliefs that underpin the behaviors. However, tracing the common threads to their place of origin is sometimes like looking for a needle in a haystack because the way you perceive an event can skew and distort the entire picture. To assemble an accurate picture of your reality, you must first disassemble the distorted picture, as one cannot co-exist with the other. Bringing

the cognitive picture into focus is essential in order to see the picture for what it really is, just as it is. If you try to add or subtract anything to or from the picture that does not belong there, the picture will remain blurry and out of focus, which means that you have less chance of identifying your own self-destructive patterns of thinking and behaving.

The process of tracing a dysfunctional thought pattern and an emotionally reactive behavior pattern to its root means parting ways with disabling and limiting beliefs that support these destructive patterns. Given that most internally digested beliefs come by way of external sources, examining the truth in long held beliefs is a challenge all unto itself. Not only are beliefs tightly woven into the destructive patterns of thought and behavior, beliefs are not easily identified because they are not readily accessible. Calling up beliefs into conscious awareness, stored in the subconscious a long time ago, implies acknowledging the existence of a belief you do not even know is present to begin with, much less to know the origins of the belief. Thus, calling up beliefs into conscious awareness comes equipped with its own built in resistance. Unsuspecting beliefs, is a web that must be untangled before there is any hope of detaching from an established thought or behavior pattern that is wreaking personal havoc in your life. Note that all the mental efforts you can muster up in a mind over matter attempt to undo an internal disorder and regain balance in your reality is not a sure way to overcome the debilitating effects caused by dysfunctional thought patterns and destructive behavior patterns. Such futile attempts equate to making a New Year's Eve resolution that starts out well intended, but quickly falls by the wayside because the energy needed to keep the resolution in movement fades. Thus, the means of keeping up the energetic momentum requires staying with the identification process until every woven thread that makes up the pattern surfaces. Staying with it is how you overcome the debilitating effects caused by these destructive patterns, thus seeing the identification process all the way through is how you establish or restore order and balance. Mind games will not get you there because there are reciprocal energies at work behind the scenes. You can purpose in your mind to accomplish something, but unless you have the constitution and the energy to stick with it and see the endeavor through every obstacle thrown into your path, your efforts will falter. Faltering is dangerous psychological territory when it leads to the feeling of failure. This self-destructive mindset tacks on additional mental and emotional layers, also tightly woven into these well-established patterns, which only makes the process of identification more difficult because where there is one, there is another. The debilitating mindset of failure brings with all its cohorts, such as fear and issues of self-worth.

Tracing back the origins of dysfunctional thought patterns and its accompanying habitual reactive behavior patterns is to take on a thorough and honest examination of the feelings and emotions these patterns activate, as well as examining the underlying beliefs, which sometimes is like sifting through sand. Even your expectations have to come under scrutiny, as they too play an active role in supporting these patterns.

Unfortunately, there really is no well-established game plan, no set psychological, cognitive, intellectual or spiritual methodology of getting from here to there. It is a haphazard, forward and backward succession of steps taken, a slow going process that reveals a little here and a little there, but if you stick with it, eventually the real picture starts to emerge and your reality begins to make some logical sense. As you progress through the process of identification, you will eventually discover the origin of the disorder in your life, whether it traces back to an event in your childhood or a more recent time in your life. You may discover that a belief you held all along was steering you in the wrong direction or that the situation was not exactly the way you recalled or perceived it occurred. On the other hand, you may trace a pattern back to its origin that occurred exactly how you recall it or interpreted it. More importantly, is the discovery that the energy of that event has been dictating the course of your reality and you have been its puppet-on-a-string ever since, needlessly reacting to the real or perceived event all along.

Because the process of identifying one or more disorders in your life can feel like a personal archeological dig, the effort often translates into a time consuming, unwelcomed and rather painful cognitive excavation into the confines of your subconscious. Discerning the past with some semblance of actual recall, much less honest recall of events that may or may not have occurred is not any easier than it is discerning the underlying disabling or limiting beliefs that have been erroneously supporting a perceived or real event and its long-term adverse effects. Then there is the matter of sorting through the feelings and emotions triggered by the event, as well as the feelings and emotions that keep surfacing long after the event, triggered by similar events as they arise in your reality, all strung together as if they were one event operating in a continuous loop, replaying over and over. When combined, all these underlying influencing and contributing factors have not only been driving the course of events experienced in your reality, they have been dictating your reality in keeping with the laws of cause and effect, attraction and manifestation, as well as a host of other spiritual laws operating behind the scenes.

Identifying the disorders in your life is a journey of discovery all unto itself. Many unsuspecting or contradictory things revealed along the way takes heaping doses of persistence and courage to push through the automatic cognitive and emotional resistance in order to see the journey through. It is for these reasons that professional help, such as psychotherapy, especially a method that includes schema therapy or cognitive behavior therapy is essential, as is metaphysical or spiritual pastoral counseling that incorporates science of mind principles, mindfulness and meditation. Realistically speaking, there is a limit to how much woven thread you can safely unravel when it comes to discerning subjective reality before you find yourself mentally and emotionally overwhelmed or burned out; long before reaching identification, let alone reaching the stage of acceptance and detachment from these patterns. This is especially

true when attempting to explore a disorder tightly woven into the fabric of other less noticeable disorders. People tend to quit the inner work they began, whether by way of self-help, professional or pastoral assistance when the going got too rough or the benefits did not appear to outweigh the effort needed to see the journey all the way through. Giving up on your journey of self-discovery leaves your therapist or counselor with no viable recourse, no means of arriving at identification, acceptance and detachment on your behalf, all of which translates to prolonging inner healing and recovery, which too prolongs order and balance in your reality. Worse yet, is that it leaves you with unfinished internal business that is not going to vanish because you bailed out. Sometimes a time out is necessary, but quitting is not the answer, especially when having barely scratched the surface.

A journey of self-discovery is not about an instantaneous quick fix or a fast turnaround; it is not a means of instant gratification that is short-lived. The journey of inner discovery can take years of effort and even the investment of financial resources before identifying well-established patterns, traced to their origins by revealing all the underlying layers that support the patterns. The process of identifying a disorder and the revelations experienced have to be valued to the extent that the price for acquiring personal freedom, even if it's just from one debilitating thought and behavior pattern far outweighs the cost in terms of time, resources, emotional and cognitive effort invested. And, it does not stop there. You must maintain an attitude of mindfulness and conscious awareness all during the process of identification and even afterwards, because the potential for unforeseen external influences, as well as your own internal influences, adversely affecting your reality always exist. People can adversely affect your reality as they thoughtlessly or thoughtfully act on their own free will. They can make choices and decisions that can catch you off guard and plunge you right back into the same dysfunctional mode of thinking that got you where you are to begin with. Avoiding personal disasters that threaten to undermine balance and order in your life requires cognitive effort to identify oncoming disorders, which means you must be present in the present at all times. You must be on your cognitive toes because if you are not, you will slip into the murky waters of subjective reality and with it goes your balance and order.

Because it takes a fair amount of exerted effort to identify, accept and detach from self-destructive thought and behavior patterns, it is not highly recommended that you take on too much too soon when first venturing onto the path of self-discovery. Too much of a good thing is just as bad as too little, but when kept in balance, the process of self-discovery epitomizes the Buddhist psychology of the "middle way" associated with the Noble Eightfold Path. Whenever the inner pendulum swings too far to the left or too far to the right, doing so not only throws you and your reality out of balance, the unbalance can exacerbate existing disorders and even create new disorders. Unfortunately, without clarity of mind, you will be the last to know that a disorder has taken hold of your internal mechanisms and is adversely affecting your reality, even though

undesirable conditions keep manifesting in your reality. As mindfulness and awareness is a healthy antidote to maintaining balance and order, it is especially so when you have worked hard to identify a disorder. Arriving at the stage of identification still leaves you challenged with the process of mentally and emotionally accepting how and why the disorder played out in your reality. Arriving at the stage of cognitive detachment from the dysfunctional thought patterns and habituated reactive behavior patterns that caused the disorder and thus the imbalance mentally and emotionally intact is a reward that is well worth all the exerted effort.

In closing, it is our hope that we have walked you through the process of identifying any disorders that may exist in your reality so that you can find your way to establishing or restoring balance and order in your life, as doing so leads to mental clarity, peace of mind and optimal mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness. Please do not hesitate to ask questions, make comments or share your personal experience.

Many Blessings,

Linda, Z and the Collective We

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