

Satyagraha for the Soul

I've battled with depression my whole life. I assumed that all little kids felt like I did. I was in my thirties before I and the psychiatrist I consulted, realised it was pretty profound depression. My mother suffered from it and her mother did too. Medical science today acknowledges the genetic component and also that low serotonin (the mood-enhancing neurotransmitter) may run in families. All too often, you hear people telling depressives to 'pull yourself out of it' or to use positive affirmations or other thought processes to drag themselves out of the slough of despond. Or it's defined by the likes of Mike Lipkin, as 'anger turned inwards' which is just so much balderdash.

How do you get your mind, trapped in an abyss of depression, to make any sort of shift? Particularly when you're so emotionally, mentally and physically drained that the prospect of even trying to engage a single thought feels like a Herculean task? There is profound philosophical truth in the statement (and many others like it) that 'you move toward and become that which you think most about.' So if your thought-pattern gets stuck in a default negative state in the mind, it will simply keep running its exhausted, despondent, anxious pattern. That's logical.

I've found that one powerful way in which you can change the program, is through 'software modification'. The starting point is to use Mohandas Gandhi's simple but brilliant technique that brought down the British Raj in India – Satyagraha, or non-violent resistance. Non co-operation if you will. Rather than setting out to crush or fight the existing and negative (thought) regime, you have to stop co-operating with it. This is passive resistance at its best.

When a negative, self-defeating or de-energising thought arises, you have to treat it as a trigger or reminder to go immediately for a positive alternative. Instead of being your enemy, that negative thought is harnessed as a catalyst or friend that jogs you into the positive alternative. As the negative arises, don't identify with it, don't fight it and don't be afraid of it. Immediately choose a positive alternative of your own making. Examples: Negative: I'm so exhausted. Positive: I'm surrounded by healing energy. Negative: Everyone's better than I am. Positive: I'm in the perfect place for my optimum development. Negative: I'm feeling so sad. Positive: I'm calm, centred and in tune with the divine. Negative: I'm so angry with life. Positive: I receive the instruction of the divine for my best growth. Negative: I'm stuck without alternatives. Positive: I'm infused with creative options and alternatives. Negative: I'm lost without any sense of direction. Positive: There's purpose in my present lack of clarity. Just take one of the most repetitive and auto-occurring thoughts and start your conversion process. It will develop its own momentum. In time the balance on the thinking see-saw can and will shift. It's certainly a whole lot better than being prisoner to out-of-control and destructive thoughts. I know it's not easy. But make a start.

Is this all gobbledegook? Emphatically, not. My spiritual Preceptor, Swami Shivapadananda, used to say this: "Imagination is the greatest gift." Not 'a' gift but the greatest gift! The nonsense of fantasising that your battered bakkie will turn into a Ferrari certainly doesn't work. But using a disruption technique in which you refuse to settle for a default program of negative thinking, by turning those thoughts into a trigger and reminder for the positive alternative, certainly does. Because that new pattern, the revised program or software if you will, has a physically altering effect on the chemicals in the brain and the body. Practise and tenacity will develop resilience and resilience will lead to lasting change.

Finally, remember to breathe. The breathing pattern of despondency is typically little, shallow, upper-chest breaths. Lie on the floor, so your shoulders can't rise. Breathe into the lower lobes of your lungs

so that your belly rises – just the way a baby breathes. Now, make sure you breathe like that all the time. Use the posture and physiology of peace, contentment and energy. The way you stand and move has a direct (biofeedback) effect on your brain. The way you think has a direct (psychosomatic) effect on your whole being. Make the two work in harmony to help you feel a whole lot better. Then see your energy and enthusiasm start returning.

By Clive Simpkins

If you'd like a free e-book version of Clive Simpkins' book, *Change Your Thinking Change Your Life*, which contains lots of similar self-help information, go to www.clivesimpkins.com and scroll down to the bottom right hand corner of the frame. Click on 'download' and be a little patient. It'll be worth the wait!

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