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On Thinking Positively and Holding a Space of Love while Dealing with Negativity: Personal and Collective Perspectives

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Many would agree that there are great evils being perpetrated in the world today. Corporations have grown so large and powerful that they are able to pursue their selfish interests at the expense of the general public, and often to the severe detriment of the average person. They have so much money that they can manipulate legislation in their favor through political contributions, and can influence public opinion through control of the media. This has reached the point that there is a growing distrust of the media, and frustration with governments that are serving corporate interests rather than those of the electorate.

The same applies to healthcare. The bureaucratization of healthcare in many countries has limited medical doctors' abilities to provide adequate care because half of their time (literally) is taken up with paperwork that is required for reimbursement and for protection against lawsuits for malpractice. This leaves many careseekers with less time with their doctor. Not only does this limit the focused intervention on the presenting medical or surgical problems, but it also makes it very difficult – if not impossible – for the careseeker to mention, or for the doctor to invite, exploration of psychological and social issues that might be contributing to the presenting problems. One of the most common complaints today is that "The doctor doesn't take time to listen to me."

The erosion of healthcare is occurring also in countries with a National Health Service. For instance, Canadian doctors are now limiting their interventions to one problem per visit! Not only is this poor medical practice for the reasons mentioned above, but it may also lead doctors to miss a diagnosis because they become over-focused on more limited symptoms in cases where the disease is actually manifesting in multiple body systems.

These limitations have provided a great stimulus to careseekers to find therapists with more wholistic approaches. Complementary/ Alternative therapies are thriving because many of these therapists address the whole person who has the symptom – and not just the symptom the person has.

Many have expressed their frustrations with these situations, and most of us shrug and ask, "What can I do about these problems? I'm just one person. How can I change these enormous problems in world?" My observations here are more about the 'how' of our inner responses to these questions than just to the actions we might take in the outer world.

Fighting the dehumanizing trends in our lives

Evil prevails when good remains silent.

-Jeremy Taylor

It is common for people to feel frustrated, anxious and angry over the limitations in available services and over abuses of power that lead to curtailment of healthcare and other resources. The tendency under such stresses is to think of fighting and battling the people and systems that produce these difficult situations.

Fighting in these situations may not be the most productive approach. When wanting to influence the people or agencies who are initiating and perpetuating an unpleasant situation, clinical experience from dealing with negativity in individual, family, group and social interactions shows that fighting them is often counterproductive. When we are angry and confrontational we provoke anger and resistance in response to our interventions. This is likely to provoke those whom we want to change to anger in response to our own angry approaches. They are therefore less likely to listen to us, much less to change their opinions, actions and policies.

Cooperative consultations

When we find ourselves frustrated, angry or saddened over a situation, it is usually helpful to clear our feelings before we engage in conversations or confrontational interactions with those whom we perceive to be perpetrators of our problems. This allows us to approach the problems from a place of appropriate concern rather than one of emotionality.

While this might appear to be a simplistic suggestion, and one that seems difficult or impossible to implement, there are many approaches that allow us to do just that when we are upset. WHEE (Benor, internet ref.), EFT (Craig, internet ref.) and other Energy Psychology approaches (ACEP, internet ref.) enable us to let go of negative emotions and thoughts and then to install positive thoughts and emotions to replace the ones we have released. We have a better chance of success when we can discuss and negotiate our issues in a calm and positive way with those whose opinions and courses of action we wish to change.

Healing approaches

Taking this approach a step further, when we bring ourselves to a place of acceptance and healing (some would use 'a place of love' to describe this state) then our chances of getting positive responses to our suggestions and requests are enhanced even further. Again, this is entirely within the range of possible when we use the approaches mentioned above – to lessen our negative attitudes and strengthen our positive feelings.

In addition, varieties of spiritual healing approaches can contribute to progress in negotiations with people who are not on board with our suggestions and recommendations. I present these in the order of my personal preferences.

Of vital importance is our attitude. What I find helpful is to center myself in a healing space, detaching from hopes and wishes for specific outcomes. While it may seem counter-intuitive to not set intentions and prayers for the outcomes that I feel are most beneficial and desirable, there are deeper reasons behind this approach. From my limited perspective – as a single pixel on the vast screen of total reality – I cannot know what is the best outcome for everyone involved in the situation being addressed. I feel that my best input is to bring love and healing to the situation, holding a wish for the outcome to be of the highest good for all. This is what I call a "Thy will be done" approach.

Another possibility is to offer healing with the intent for better outcomes for people or situations that are functioning at less than optimal levels – such as for the Gulf oil disaster. Research shows that healing can bring about improvements in individuals and in groups of organisms (Benor, 2001a; 2001b). Here the intent may be anywhere along the spectrum from the general wish that the highest good be done for all... to seeking the highest good for those in need of healing, according to their wishes, intents and needs... to inviting them into spaces of healing that I can sense/ intuit but which may be outside their frames of reference or conscious awareness... to "Heal, damn it, heal!" The earlier approaches in this spectrum invite a decision from the collective consciousness regarding whether and how healing might be helpful. The latter is not my preference, but is essentially the attitude of some healers whom I've observed producing impressive changes in people, but coming from a place of the healers' own ego enhancement – for instance, seeking to prove what great healers they are. This is a "My will be done" approach.

Good and evil

You may well be asking, "How can you not wish for a specific outcome when you confront a person or situation that is evil?" The question of how to deal with evil has occupied philosophers, theologians and most other thinking persons throughout recorded history.

There are several profound problems to address in answering this question. The first is to ask, "What is evil?" Negativity may range from unintentional oversight, through selfish disregard for others' needs and welfare, and on to deliberate exploitation and abuse of others. At some point along this spectrum, the negativity may reach a point of being considered evil. Evil is often judged to be morally reprehensible behavior, arising from bad character or conduct that causes harm. Evil may be expressed as deliberate actions against others or as actions that unintentionally influence others through selfish pursuits. Evil may also be expressed indirectly towards other living beings through selfish exploitation of natural resources or pollution that produce negative consequences.

The second is to consider how best to respond to evil. Again, there are many options along a spectrum of approaches. The most common approach is to fight evil. This is almost a reflexive response, constantly reinforced in history lessons (tailored and retailored to each nation's agendas and propaganda), myths of heroes and villains, and a regular feature in novels and in the popular media.

At the other end of the spectrum is the view that we have to bring more light and healing into this world, without directly confronting evil. Here the guiding principle is that when we fight evil we are actually giving evil more energy.

... at the center of this meaning for our time is the axiom that man has to stand fast in the good while working hard to understand the nature of evil, without becoming part of it, that is the only way of making evil see light. Understanding is the essence of metamorphosis. One need not attack evil necessarily, but it is most important that one should not become part of it. And that is difficult.

- Sir Laurens van der Post

There is also the danger that in literally fighting evil – as in battlefield conflict – it may be difficult to avoid acting in evil ways ourselves. Robert MacNamara states in *The Fog of War* that had the West lost in World War II, many in our government would have been tried as war criminals – for firebombing in Germany and Japan, as well as for dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki when Japan was ready in any case to capitulate. The US leaders seized the opportunity to establish their power and domination over the world by dropping the atomic bombs.

Being charitable, one might speculate that in the heat of wartime emotions the 'good side' acted in ways that were evil.

When good fights evil, good becomes evil.

- Alan Cohen

Observing the US has systematically pursuing militaristic and economic dominations over the world, and currently engaged (together with British and Canadian allies) in major wars that are being pursued with great brutality, my first reaction is to be very skeptical that the US deserves any slack in being judged to be evil. However, taking my own lesson to heart, I have to find within myself a center from which to respond in a more healing manner.

...by hating evil or one who is engaged in evil you contribute to the absence of Light and not to its presence. Hatred of evil does not diminish evil, it increases it.

- Gary Zukav

How is each of us to stay firmly on the side of good and to avoid contributing to or becoming evil? The best way is to hold firm and remain as much as possible in places of being and doing good.

An old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all.

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather:

"Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

- Author unknown

Meta-questions about good and evil

There is wise observation that we would not know good in the same way that we do, were it not for the existence of evil – just as we could not know light without darkness; love without indifference or hate; or masculinity without femininity; and so on.

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

– Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

In the world of spiritual awareness – within wholistic healing – there are many who observe that humanity seems to be a staging ground for exploring the interplays of good and evil. Numerous people who recall past lives (including myself) recall memories of having been treated cruelly and other memories of having been brutally cruel ourselves. It seems that when we come into our incarnations we agree to play out these roles with each other. So sometimes we take on the roles of aggressors and abusers, and sometimes we are victims and abused.

How can we understand what appears to be evil in the light of these awarenesses? It seems that what we judge to be good and evil are actually challenges to our spiritual growth. If we get caught up in anger and respond to oppression and brutality with counter-aggression, we are missing the lessons.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows like harmony in music; there is a dark inscrutable workmanship that reconciles discordant elements, makes them cling together in one society.
- William Wordsworth

You may be asking, "How is it possible to respond without anger when one is being abused?" There are varieties of examples to answer this question.

There are people who lived through years in concentration camps. Some of their stories are recounted after their deaths by the other camp survivors, and other survived to tell their stories themselves. One of the better known survivors is Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who helped found Existential Psychotherapy. Here are a few of his observations:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

The one thing you can't take away from me is the way I choose to respond to what you do to me. The last of one's freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given circumstance.

What is to give light must endure burning.

Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it [is] he who is asked.

When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.

There are people who lived through Apartheid, suffering enormous deprivations, racial prejudice and violence. One of the most renowned spokespersons for transcending this experience is Nelson Mandela. In his words (a collection of his quotes):

The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

Your freedom and mine cannot be separated.

After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

Most would consider Frankl and Mandela as extraordinary and exceptional human beings, and in the world of today they are. Yet each of us has the potential to transform our own, personal world in ways similar to the ways they did.

Approaches for dealing with our responses to what we feel is evil

Jesus said, "Do not resist evil." (Matthew 5:39)

The resistance itself is the evil. When there is no resistance, energy is unobstructed and flows. When there is resistance, movement stops, backs up, and stagnates.

As long as Evil is not a living entity nobody will take his own shadow seriously...Evil verily does not decrease by being joshed up as a non-reality or as mere negligence fo man. It was there before him, when he could not possibly have had a hand in it.

- Carl Jung (from van der Post, 1976)

For personal clearings, you can let anger, anxieties and fears in response to what feels to you like evil be your alerts/ 'telephone rings'/ alarm bells. Let these alerts invite you to look inward for wholistic, spiritual, healing ways to deal with your feelings and stressful situations.

Pause as soon as you can notice yourself when you are experiencing such reactions. If you watch or listen to the daily news, this should be an easy practice to initiate! When you feel such responses in personal interactions, it may be more difficult at first to pause long enough to catch yourself. You may create opportunities to practice at the end of your day, after you have distanced yourself somewhat from the immediacy of your responses.

Ask yourself why these issues are stirring your emotions. Look in particular for life experiences that resonate with your current life experiences.

Everything is a lesson. Every challenge, every 'accident,' every encounter, every internal experience.

Use whatever methods work best for you to clear your negative responses from present and past experiences. I find that when I combine issues from the present with issues from my past, the clearings are deeper, more thorough and more lasting.

My favorite method is [WHEE](#): Wholistic Hybrid derived from EMDR and EFT. WHEE is a self-treatment method that is extremely simple to learn and to use, yet very rapidly and deeply effective. Within minutes it can reduce physical and psychological pains, even when these have been present for decades. WHEE is also helpful with stress and distress that often contribute to pains and make them more painful and less tolerable. These, too, can be released within minutes.

WHEE is a wholistic approach. By this I mean that it addresses spirit, relationships (with other people and the rest of the world), mind, emotions and body (as matter and energy).

WHEE can be very rapidly effective with most negativity. I believe that its broad success is due to its wholistic nature; because it is completely individualized to the preferences and needs of those who use it; and because it enables you to install positive feelings and cognitions to replace whatever negatives you have released.

By combining elements of [Ho'oponopono \(a Hawaiian healing approach\)](#) with WHEE, one can also transform any self-healings, as well as healing interactions with others, into healings for the collective

consciousness (Benor, 2008a; 2008b). In brief: after completing the healing process, one invites "anyone and everyone, anywhere and everywhere, anywhen and everywhen who resonates with this healing to come along for their own healing."

There are of course countless other approaches for transforming our negativity. Among my favorites are the Dalai Lama's teachings of compassion; Eckhart Tolle's 'Power of Now;' and Bert Hellinger's Family Constellation therapy (Payne, 2005).

For collective healings of responses to what feels like evil, I am very impressed with the approaches used in reconciliation interventions (Helmick and Petersen, 2001; Huncik 2006). Groups of people are gathered, including representatives of sectarian diversity, where the participants have been in conflict or at war over long periods of time. So the mix could include Palestinians and Israelis; blacks and whites in South Africa; or Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda. Each group shares its beliefs and feelings about the other group. Participants share personal stories relating to the long-standing intergroup conflicts. Gradually, as people hear each other's suffering, a mutual compassion and respect develops, which enables participants to overcome their sectarian beliefs and prejudices.

It is fascinating to read about these group transformations. Love and compassion are truly transformative! And this is not just a spiritual exercise in "Love thy neighbor as thyself." If enough people can adopt this approach, we may increase our chance of surviving the impending man-made crises of collapses in finances, military mistakes, resource management and distribution, and ecological systems.

Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of.

And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake.

- Viktor Frankl

What does life look like if you assume the Universe is a positive place, despite the presence of what feels like evil?

I'm finding life a lot more enjoyable as I increasingly live with this question, and with the practices that help me release my frustrations and angers over a less than perfect world. Sometimes it's not easy to let go of my expectations and wishes in order to turn a corner and move in a new direction, with a new awareness, as the Universe and All That IS invite me to participate in a plan far larger than my here-and-now consciousness can fully comprehend. The consistent messages I get in meditation are to always come from a place of love and acceptance.

If you're up for an adventure, see what it feels like to you, living each moment with this awareness.

Last night, as I was sleeping

I dreamt-oh marvelous error!-

That I had a beehive

Here inside my heart.

And the golden bees

Were making white combs

And sweet honey

From my old failures.

- Antonio Machado, trans. Robert Bly

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