

A small collection of content from  
“A Guide to The Present Moment”  
designed to get you familiar with  
“The 5 Steps to The Present Moment”,  
and to show you how this process can  
help you to live in the moment.

An Introduction to

# How To Live In The Moment

Noah Elkrief

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[www.liveinthemoment.org](http://www.liveinthemoment.org)

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# My Story

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From the time I was born, my father would bring me to meditation retreats on almost every vacation. For some unknown reason, *I always wanted to know the truth about life more than anything else* (a concept I called “spiritual enlightenment”). I knew that what I was seeing and experiencing wasn’t the whole story. This longing was so strong that every wish I ever made was only to know this truth (except this one time that I wished to kiss my teenage crush). Since I believed meditation would eventually expose this truth, I started doing meditation practices every day when I was six years old.

Besides my goal of enlightenment, I also wanted success, wealth, and a job I enjoyed; I wanted to go to amazing parties, to date beautiful women, to prove I was smart, and to see the most beautiful places in the world, and I wanted people to love me. Somehow, at a relatively young age, *I managed to get everything I ever wanted*. I was working in a prestigious and high-paying job that I loved as a corporate strategy consultant in London after a stint on the trading floor at Goldman Sachs. I had been accepted into Mensa, traveled around the world, seen more incredible scenes of nature than I could have imagined, enjoyed unbelievable parties in exotic places, and dated beautiful women from all around Europe, and everyone always seemed to love me. All of this led me to have an incredibly high opinion of myself, and I honestly believed I was the happiest guy in the world.

*Yet I still wasn’t content*. I constantly needed to keep myself busy in order to keep improving myself and my situation. I was always spending my time, money, and energy searching for more fun moments. I frequently judged others in order to maintain my relative opinion of myself (as smarter, funnier, cooler, and happier than others). Even though I already believed everyone loved me, I still worried about their opinions of me, because I needed to make sure I maintained or even further improved their opinions of me. *All of this prevented me from feeling relaxed, free, whole, loving, or peaceful*.

Then, one day in the summer of 2009, while I was walking by myself in a wheat field at a meditation retreat in southern England, all of a sudden all my thoughts seemed to disappear. It seemed as if all of my thoughts were just blown away, nowhere to be found. My mind seemed completely empty. Without my thoughts, what remained was a feeling of incredible peace, freedom, relaxation, and openness. It seemed as if I was opening my eyes and looking at the world for the very first time. My mind was open, free, and peaceful. *This* was everything I had ever wanted.

As it turned out, this wasn’t just a passing experience. The vast majority of my recurring psychological thoughts vanished in that wheat field, and have rarely attempted to return. These psychological thoughts included almost all of my thoughts about myself, my situation, others, and what others thought about me, as well as my thoughts about the past, the

future, and who I might become. Without these thoughts, my mind was left predominantly silent, and I was left in the peace I had always been searching for. That moment in the wheat field marked the end of my search for enlightenment, and the end of my pursuit of happiness.

It turned out that some old psychological thoughts did remain after the initial loss of thoughts, and new psychological thoughts sometimes arose. However, from that moment on, any time I felt any unwanted emotion, I could see that it was being created by a thought. Once I found the instigating thought, I would ask myself, “Do I know this thought is true?” To my surprise, every time I asked myself this question, I would immediately recognize that I did *not* know whether the thought was true. As soon as I realized that I didn’t know for sure whether my thought was true, my unwanted emotion would instantly dissolve and I would come right back to my natural state of contentment. On top of that, each time I stopped believing one of my thoughts to be true, that thought would rarely ever return.

Since the thoughts that would normally create suffering and discontent either don’t arise in my mind or aren’t believed when they do show up, all of my attention remains on the present moment. At work, I never experienced stress or pressure, even when I was behind on a project that had a strict deadline. When my intuition told me that it was time to leave my job, there was no fear, despite not knowing what I would do next. After knee surgery, I couldn’t stand or walk for a year without being in pain, yet I didn’t have any self-pity or frustration about it. When I waited with my father in the emergency room for MRIs and CT scans of his brain, I felt no worry about what might happen to him. Because I am present, no matter what my circumstances are, I remain in peace.

After a year of living like this, my friends spontaneously started to open up to me about their suffering and discontent. Each time someone would tell me about an unwanted emotion, I was able to help them identify the thought that was creating their emotion and then offer them questions to help them challenge their thought. Sure enough, they almost always discovered that they didn’t actually know whether their thought was true. Each time they disbelieved their thought, their unwanted emotion would immediately dissolve, bringing them back to the peace of the present moment. As my friends told their friends, allowing me to go through this process with more and more people, I realized that *anyone* could disbelieve the thoughts that create their suffering, and become present.

I have now created a 5-step process that anyone can use on their own to stop believing the thoughts that keep them from living in peace and acting with love. This short ebook is meant to share that process with you.

# Introduction

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*Do you want to stop struggling with anxiety, stress, or fear about the future?*

*Do you want to stop holding on to anger, sadness, or guilt from the past?*

*Do you want to stop worrying about what others think?*

*Do you want to stop judging others, or feeling resentment in your relationships?*

*Do you want to stop judging yourself, feeling unworthy, or sensing that something is missing from your life?*

All these emotions seem inevitable and even inescapable while you're in their grip. But if you're willing to look at your life with real honesty, it is possible to discover that they are all created by thoughts in your mind—thoughts about yourself, your relationships, your situations, your past, your future—and each of them can vanish in an instant if you just stop believing these thoughts to be true.

If a random person tells you, “The world is going to end tomorrow”, *and you believe them*, how would you feel? You will likely experience fear. But if *you didn't believe them*, then how would their comment make you feel? You almost certainly wouldn't feel any fear. If a co-worker tells you, “I deleted all of your emails!”, *and you believe them*, how do you think you would feel? You would probably get angry. But if your co-worker told you this, *and you didn't believe them at all* because they are always joking around, then how do you think you would feel? You almost surely wouldn't experience anger because there would be nothing to be angry about.

These scenarios demonstrate that when you believe someone's words to be true, they create emotions. But when you don't believe someone's words, their words don't have the power to create emotions. The same is true of the thoughts (words) in your mind. If you believe a negative thought about yourself or your life, that thought will create an unwanted emotion. But if you don't believe these thoughts, they simply won't create emotions.

This ebook will help you to experience the inherent peace of living in the moment by providing you with a 5-step process that will enable you to identify and disbelieve the thoughts that create all of your unwanted emotions. I've seen this process bring peace to the lives of people facing every conceivable kind of challenge. I've watched a man break free from anger towards his parents for the way they treated him as a child. I've watched a woman shed her sadness about her divorce from her husband. I've watched people stop worrying about what others think, and stop feeling anxiety about what may happen in their jobs. I've watched countless people come to feel whole, loved, and worthy as never before, solely because they were able to disbelieve the thoughts that made them feel unloved, unworthy, and incomplete in some way.

# The Issue with our Pursuit of Happiness

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We all want to be happy. But in order to succeed in our pursuit of happiness, we first need to identify and understand the cause of our unhappiness. Most of us have gone through life believing that the circumstances and events in our lives are the cause of our sadness, anger, anxiety, and feeling of incompleteness. This is what we were taught. Therefore, naturally, we try to change our circumstances in order to find happiness. But eventually, some of us come to realize that the way we have been pursuing happiness isn't working or just isn't enough. *The reason we don't feel free, whole, and happy isn't because we aren't good enough, it isn't because we are missing something, and it isn't because we haven't achieved the perfect circumstances. It is simply because we have been pursuing happiness in the wrong place. Our pursuit of happiness hasn't been addressing the actual cause of our unhappiness.*

As young children, most of us are happy the majority of the time. As adults, most of us aren't. So what happened to us? Quite simply, we learned many concepts about what is "perfect". Our concept of "perfect" can also be referred to as our ideas of the "right" way, how we think things "should be", and what we think is "best", "good", "cool", or "appropriate". We were taught these concepts both formally and informally by our parents, teachers, and friends; we absorbed them from TV, movies, and collective societal views.

When we were young children (under six), before we learned most of our concepts of what is "perfect", we had nothing to compare our life against. Without a concept of "perfect" to compare things against, we rarely decided that any aspect of ourselves, others, or our situation was "bad" or "not good enough". Without these thoughts about what isn't "good enough" in our life, we felt free, whole, and happy.

As we developed more and more concepts of what is "perfect" over the years, we began to increasingly compare everything in our life to these concepts. Naturally, life has come up short quite a bit, and we frequently ended up labeling things in our lives—actions, words, events, situations, feelings, personality traits, physical appearances—as "bad" or "not good enough". Each time we decide "something isn't good enough", we begin to experience a subtle sense of sadness or lack. If we look to blame someone for some "bad" aspect of our life, then we experience anger towards whoever we believe is to blame.

Instead of realizing that our feelings of sadness and anger are created by our thoughts, we unknowingly believe that these emotions are directly created by our circumstances being factually "bad" or "not good enough". This misunderstanding causes us to try to change our circumstances from being "not good enough" to being "perfect" in order to become happy. This is how our pursuit of happiness gets started. We don't recognize that this is really just an attempt to change our thoughts about our circumstances from "this isn't



good enough” to “this is perfect”. Once we believe that the “perfect” circumstances would make us happiest, we unconsciously conclude that failure to achieve the “perfect” circumstances would result in suffering, or at least less happiness. This possible result is then labeled to be a “bad” or “worse” outcome. As soon as we have formed the idea of a “bad” or “worse” outcome, we begin to fear that outcome.

For example, when we are young children, we are fine with our bodies as they are, regardless of our weight. Then, as we get older, we learn that skinny is “good” and fat is “bad”. Once we learn this, we start to believe, “I am not good enough the way I am” and this creates the feeling of sadness or insufficiency. But since we attribute our sadness to our weight instead of our *thoughts* about our weight, we logically form a goal to become skinnier (“perfect”) so that we can be happy again. This misunderstanding causes us to believe that it would be “bad” if we never became skinny, thereby creating our anxiety.

As children, we are happy and content being single. At some point in our lives we then learn that marriage is essential to being happy. Once we believe “marriage is needed for happiness”, we automatically believe, “I don’t have something I need to be happy”. This makes us believe that “my life isn’t good enough the way it is”. This thought then creates a subtle sense of sadness or a feeling of being incomplete. We then unknowingly blame these feelings on not having a spouse, which makes us begin our long search for a spouse so that we can be happy. But since we believe marriage will make us happy, we inevitably believe that failure to find a spouse will leave us unhappy (a “bad” outcome). This causes us to experience fear that we will never find a spouse. And if we don’t find a spouse by the time we think we should, we may then think, “I shouldn’t still be single”, which would cause us to feel sad or ashamed.

When we are young children, we are generally happy with the size of our house and type of car we ride in. However, once we are adults, many of us tend to believe that our house or car aren’t “good enough”, thereby making us sad or embarrassed about the house we live in or the car we drive. Because we believe our sadness or embarrassment is created directly by our situation, not by our thoughts, we often spend a great deal of time and money trying to get the “perfect” house or car in order to make ourselves happy. If we think the “perfect” house or car will make us happy, then we tend to think that it would be “bad” if we didn’t get them. This concept then creates our fear and anxiety that we will never get the “perfect” house or car in the future.

How would your experience of life be different if you didn’t have all of these judgments about yourself, your situation, and the people in your life?



# The Experience of The Present Moment

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Can you remember the happiness you felt in the very moment that you achieved an important goal? This may be the moment that someone proposed marriage to you, you gave birth to a healthy child, you got the job you wanted, or the moment that you had passed an important exam. Before that moment, you may have had complaints that life wasn't good enough, or you may have had a lot of anxiety about whether or not you would achieve your goal. But in the moment that you achieved your goal, all these thoughts were gone. There were no complaints about the way life is and no worries about what might happen. When you got what you wanted, you experienced a brief absence of thoughts, and that is what made you feel happy. In that moment of wonderful peace, joy, or happiness, you experienced the present moment.

Our thoughts broadly fall into two main categories: psychological thoughts and functional thoughts. All of the thoughts discussed in the last section are psychological thoughts. These are the ones that decide whether something is "good" or "bad". Functional thoughts are mostly answers to the question "How do I do that?" Purely functional thoughts don't create suffering, only psychological thoughts do. In the rest of this book, when "thoughts" are mentioned, I am referring to psychological thoughts.

In any moment when we have no psychological thoughts, or we don't believe our psychological thoughts, what remains is the experience of the present moment. Whenever our psychological thoughts aren't creating our experience of life, we get to directly experience whatever is happening in a given moment. The direct experience of any moment is the experience of the present moment. In general, we rarely get to directly experience whatever is happening in a given moment because our experience is constantly being created by our thoughts of what was "good" or "bad" in the past, what is "good" or "bad" right now, or what may be "good" or "bad" in the future. For example, we don't just experience our tasks at work, we experience our thoughts about how our work is "perfect" or "not good enough", how "boring" or "fun" the rest of the day will be, and whether our boss will be happy or unhappy with our work. These thoughts are what create our wide array of emotions.

When we don't have or believe the thoughts that create our unwanted emotions, none of these emotions are experienced, and we get to experience the present moment. Regardless of how "bad" our circumstances may seem, when we experience the present moment (when we are present), we are free of all insecurities, anger, sadness, fears, anxieties, depression, judgment, hatred, internal conflict, jealousy, and irritation. When we are present, what remains is an unconditional peace, freedom, and happiness. This peace is everything we have ever wanted. It is complete satisfaction.

# Why Getting What We Want Can't Fulfill Us

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Since we believe that our circumstances create our unwanted emotions, the vast majority of our time, money and energy in life are spent trying to change our circumstances from “not good enough” to “perfect” in order to make ourselves happy. When we get what we want (make something “perfect”), we often immediately experience happiness. But, as you may have come to realize, this strategy doesn't really fulfill us. We tend to live life with a lot of suffering and discontent between our brief moments of happiness. The reason this strategy isn't enough to give us the overall peace and happiness we are looking for is because it just doesn't address most of the thoughts that create our unhappiness. Let's take a look at some of the thoughts that will continue to make us unhappy:

- No matter how “perfect” our circumstances are, they don't change our thoughts about “bad” events from our past that create our sadness, guilt, and anger.
- We can't change many of the aspects about ourselves and others that we think are “bad” (e.g., height, weight, face, personality). This leaves us feeling ashamed or angry.
- We aren't always able to achieve our ideas of “perfect”. When we don't get what we want, our thoughts create sadness, anger, guilt, or despair.
- When we manage to get the “perfect” circumstance we want, we often instantly begin to fear and worry about losing it. We may fear losing our “perfect” job or partner, or worry about losing our “great” appearance, strength, or athleticism as we get older.
- We can always lose any “great” circumstances that we have. When this happens, our thoughts clearly make us suffer.
- Changing circumstances can't help to alleviate most of our anxiety. No matter how “great” our circumstances are, we will still have almost all of our anxieties and worries about what others think about us, about not getting what we want, about loved ones getting hurt, and about any other outcomes we think would be “bad”.
- Regardless of how “perfect” we make ourselves or our situation, it often isn't enough to change our negative thoughts about ourselves (stop us from feeling unworthy).
- It often takes a lot of time to change something from “bad” to “perfect”. During this time, we are stuck experiencing sadness and anxiety from believing that “something isn't good enough” and “it would be bad if I don't get what I want”.
- As long as we believe our idea of “perfect”, we will also believe our idea of “imperfect” circumstances. This means that there are always going to be more negative thoughts to keep creating our sadness, anger, and anxiety.

It's time to go to the source of our unwanted emotions and directly address the thoughts that are making us unhappy.

# The 5 Steps to The Present Moment

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The 5 Steps is not theory, it is not philosophy, and none of its content is meant to be believed. It is a process based entirely on direct discovery. For this reason, each of the five steps revolves around questions for you to ask yourself.

**The 5 Steps to The Present Moment are:**

**1) Pick an unwanted emotion** - The first step is to pick an emotion you don't want to have anymore. It should be specific to a certain time, place, or circumstance.

**2) Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion** - Since it can often be difficult to find the thoughts for yourself, there are a variety of questions to aid you in the process of identifying the specific thoughts behind your emotions.

**3) Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances** - As a result of this recognition, your attention can be taken away from who you think is to blame, how you are the victim, or how to change things, and directed to questioning the validity of the thoughts that are causing your suffering.

**4) Discover that you don't know whether your thought is true** - For each thought that creates one of your unwanted emotions, it is possible to discover that you don't know whether it is true. Once you no longer believe a thought to be true, the corresponding emotion dissolves. There's certainly nothing "wrong" or "bad" about feeling any of our emotions. This process is just about giving us the option to choose happiness instead of suffering in any moment that we want to be happy.

**5) Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering** - Even though you may want to be happy, your mind may still try to convince you that you are "better" off keeping your unwanted emotion by creating a reason for why it might be "bad" if you lost it. Just as you can question the truth of the thoughts that create your suffering, you can also question the validity of any thoughts that try to convince you to continue suffering.

This ebook will help you to understand the power of this process by taking you through five examples of how others have used The 5 Steps to dissolve their unwanted emotions. Since the aim of this ebook is only to get you acquainted with The 5 Steps, **each example will only use one question from each step**, and each question will have a detailed explanation to help you understand it. *When you go through the process on your own, you can use as many questions as it takes to help you identify and disbelieve your thought (e.g. there are 5 questions for Step 3 and 34 questions that can be used in Step 4). You can find all of the questions, explanations, and instructions in my book and [free web app](#).*

# How The 5 Steps Immediately Brings Us Present and Makes Us Happier

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We tend to go through life unknowingly believing our thoughts about circumstances to be completely true. We don't think, "I am not sure whether this situation is terrible", we think, "This situation *is* terrible". We don't think, "I don't know if he is mean", we think, "He *is* mean". We don't think, "It might make me happier if I get the promotion", we think, "I *need* this promotion to be happy". We don't think, "Failing the test might be bad for my life", we think, "Failing the test *would* be bad". As soon as we believe any of these thoughts, we experience our seemingly "negative" emotions.

Since we believe our thoughts to be true, our emotions almost always seem completely justified and logical, as though they are the only appropriate reaction. We think it makes sense to be sad when we fail at getting something we wanted. But it only seems this way because we fully believe, "It *is* bad that I didn't get what I want" or "It *would* have been better if I had gotten what I wanted". It seems logical for us to get angry at our husband when he forgets about our dinner date. But this reaction only seems appropriate because we believe, "It *is* bad that he forgot" or "He *must* not care about me". However, the fact of the matter is, all of these types of thoughts are just assumptions. These thoughts aren't facts, and they aren't known to be true. They are simply uninvestigated theories and interpretations of events in our life.

Whenever we experience an unwanted emotion, it is because we are believing "my thought *is* true". However, for each thought that creates one of our unwanted emotions, it is possible to discover that we don't know whether it is true. When we recognize "my thought is not true" or "I don't know whether my thought is true", we have stopped believing "my thought *is* true". When we stop believing that our thought *is* true (when we have "disbelieved" it), our emotion dissolves. For example, if a friend told you that your house just burned down, *and you believed them*, how would you feel? You would likely feel upset. But if your friend told you this, *and you didn't believe your friend at all* (maybe because they are always talking nonsense), then how would you feel? If you didn't believe what your friend said, then you would have no reason to feel upset, and you therefore wouldn't be emotionally affected by the comment. In the same way, if you don't believe a thought (word) in your mind to be true, it won't create an emotion. The questions in The 5 Steps are meant to help us disbelieve all of the thoughts that make us unhappy.

When we are suffering, we are often giving a large portion of our attention to a few specific thoughts or stories. When we disbelieve these thoughts, our attention is free for a moment. Our attention is then left completely on this moment, and all of a sudden, we are fully present. *What remains is the experience of the present moment.* This experience can

last for seconds or days until our attention returns to other thoughts. But even after our attention goes to other thoughts, we are now happier than we were because we no longer have the specific unwanted emotion that our thought was creating.

Imagine that you are an aspiring singer and you just performed a new song on stage for the first time. Then, when you get off the stage and ask your friend how you did, he says to you, “That was terrible!” This would likely make you feel hurt or embarrassed. But if your friend then smiles, and you recognize that he was joking, how would this affect your emotional state? You would likely feel in an instant sense of relief. This is the same type of emotional impact that we experience when we disbelieve a thought.

Here is a quick exercise to help you get a taste of this sense of relief. Below are five sets of thoughts. First imagine how you would feel (or have felt) if you were in a situation where you had the first thought in each set. Make sure to strongly emphasize the words that are italicized. Then tell yourself the alternative second thought, pretending that you just became aware of some new piece of information, and now you really don’t know whether your original assertion was true. See how this thought makes you feel. Notice the difference in feeling and how your emotion loses most or all of its power.

- 1) “*It is* bad that I didn’t get the job offer” — “I really don’t know whether it will be good or bad for my life that I didn’t get the job offer”
- 2) “My boyfriend *doesn’t* care about me” — “My boyfriend might care about me”
- 3) “She *is* to blame for what happened” — “I don’t know if she is to blame”
- 4) “She *was* disrespectful to me” — “I don’t know if she was being disrespectful”
- 5) “It *would* be bad if my daughter doesn’t get accepted into her top choice college” — “The truth is that I don’t know if it would be bad for my daughter’s life for her to get rejected from her top choice college”

If you go to see a magician cut his assistant in half for the first time, you are likely to feel scared or shocked by it because you believe what is happening is real and true. But if the magician then shows the audience how the trick works, the next time you see someone get cut in half, you won’t be emotionally affected because you won’t believe that what you’re seeing is true. In the same way, when you disbelieve a thought, you have essentially exposed how the trick works. If the same thought arises again in your mind, you are much less likely to be fooled by it (believe it) because you have already seen why the thought isn’t known to be true.

When we disbelieve the thoughts that create our suffering in any specific situation, we often wind up being happy in that situation in the future. As we disbelieve more of our thoughts, we become happier in more situations, and we are left with more silence between thoughts. The fewer thoughts we believe, the more we are living in the present moment, and the more peace, love, laughter, and gratitude we experience in our life.

# Example 1: Ben is stressed about his upcoming job interview

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## **Step 1: Pick an unwanted emotion**

*Ben: "I am stressed about my upcoming job interview."*

## **Step 2: Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion**

### **What outcome do I think would be "best" or make me happiest?**

*Ben: "I would be happiest if I was able to get the job offer."*

## **Step 3: Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances**

### **How do I feel when I think this thought or tell myself this story?**

How do you feel when you think this thought? Does thinking about this story create an emotion? A moment ago you likely weren't feeling any emotion. Then, just by thinking, you began to experience an emotional reaction.

It may seem as if a "bad" circumstance or event is responsible for creating your unwanted emotion, but there is no "bad" circumstance or event happening in this moment to create your emotion. You are just reading a book, but yet you experienced an emotional reaction nonetheless. If a specific event created a specific emotional experience, it would only be able to create that emotional experience while the event was actually happening. A specific event or circumstance might have happened in the past, but it is not happening now. Therefore, the event can't be creating your emotional reaction right now. If you experience an emotional reaction right now, it must have been created by something that's going on right now. Since you were giving attention to thoughts, your emotion must be a direct reaction to the thoughts you just had, not any circumstance or event. You might not have been able to have thoughts about the event if the event had never happened, but it is still your thoughts that are creating the emotion and not the event.

In comparison, if you took a shower last week that made your hair wet, could you make your hair wet again right now just by thinking about the shower you took? No. This is because the water created your wet hair, not your thoughts. If you could create wet hair right now just by thinking, then you would know that thoughts alone create wet hair. In the same way, since thoughts can create an emotion right now just from thinking about a past event, we know that thoughts alone are creating our emotion.

If your thought is about the future, since no “bad” event has actually happened, the emotion can't be created by an event. The emotion can only be created by a thought. If you think about taking a shower next week, could this make your hair wet right now? No. This is because water creates wet hair, not thoughts. If thinking about taking a shower next week made your hair wet right now, you would know without any doubt that thoughts caused your hair to be wet, and not water. In the same way, since thinking about a future event can create anxiety, worry, or anger right now, we know that thoughts alone are creating these emotions.

Even if you didn't get to feel the emotions from these exercises, you can probably admit that we often seem to experience emotions as a result of circumstances that happened in the past or may happen in the future. We may grieve for years after the death of a loved one. We may be angry at our parents twenty years after we have left home for things they did in our childhood. Similarly, we could experience fear and anxiety over the prospect of having a meeting or a job interview go badly well before the meeting or interview even happens. If we are experiencing the emotion now when no event is happening now, or no event ever happened, then an event can't be creating the emotion. The only action happening right now is our thinking. Therefore, it can only be our thinking that is creating our emotion.

**The Questions:** What emotions or physical sensations do I experience when I think this thought? If an event itself created my emotion, then wouldn't the event only be able to create the emotion while it was actually happening? If no “bad” circumstance is actually happening right now but yet I can create an emotion right now just by thinking, then can I admit that thoughts have created my emotion rather than circumstances?

*Ben: “I feel anxious, tense, and worried that I won't get the job offer when I think this thought. Yes, I can admit that my situation isn't causing my anxiety, my thoughts are. Nothing bad has happened—I haven't even had the interview yet.”*

#### **Step 4: Discover that you don't know whether your thought is true**

**Do I know with absolute certainty what outcome would make myself or others happiest? Can I think of a few possible “bad” effects of getting the outcome I want?**

Since we believe our “insufficient” circumstances are the cause of our unhappiness, we try to make our circumstances “perfect” in order to make ourselves happy. We almost always seem to operate under the assumption “I know what's best for me”, “I know what's best for them”, “I know what would make me happiest”, “I know what would make them happiest”. We might think, “It would be best if”... “I arrive on time”, “My



boss is impressed by my work”, “The guy is interested in me”, “My child gets a good grade”, or “My wife lands the new client”.

When we treat what we want as what is “best” for us or as what would make us happiest, then we naturally believe that not getting the circumstance (outcome) we want will leave us unhappy or at least less happy. As soon as we decide that what we want will make us happiest, we simultaneously and unconsciously decide that every other outcome would be “bad” or “worse”. Our fear, stress, anxiety, pressure, and worries all arise from this one simple idea that “some bad outcome could happen”.

Not only that, but if we don't get the outcome we want, we then experience anger, sadness, hopelessness, and frustration because we think that the outcome we've gotten is “worse” and that we can't be as happy with it. The same applies to our ever-present idea that we know what is “best” for our friends, partners, and children. We have anxiety about whether they will get “what's best” for them, and we get sad or angry when they don't get (or do) “what's best”.

But if we can discover that we don't really know what outcome would be best, this stops us from deciding that all other outcomes are “worse”, and thus eliminates our fear of not getting what we want for ourselves or others. So, do we actually know what outcome would make ourselves or others happiest? It may seem that we do, but there are actually a number of reasons why we can't really know what outcome would be best. Let's take a look at a few:

- a) If some people who have what you want aren't happy, then can you know for sure that getting what you want would make you happy? For example, are all people with wealth, success, fame, respect, or love happy?
- b) If you never experienced getting the particular outcome that you want, then can you know for sure that you will like it? For example, is it possible that you won't like the responsibilities of the job you want? Is it possible that your daughter won't enjoy the college you think would be best for her?
- c) Since you don't know all of the effects of any outcome, can you know for sure that a specific outcome would be best for you or for others? For example, is it possible that success, a promotion, or power would lead to longer hours, a demanding boss, more anxiety, more pressure, less job security, or make you less available to spend time with your family, thereby making your wife unhappy and your kids disappointed?
- d) If others can believe that the outcome you want wouldn't be best for you, then can you really be sure that this outcome would make you happiest? For example, could someone else think that you wouldn't be as happy if you got success, fame, or marriage?

When we recognize that we don't know what outcome would be best for ourselves or others, we can realize that we don't know whether it would be "bad" not to get the outcome we want. We are realizing that our happiness does not depend on getting the outcome we want. This takes the pressure off everything we do. We can pursue what we want without stress or worry. Then our pursuit of what we want takes on a certain feeling of lightness, and we can be happy while pursuing any goal we want.

**The Questions:** Is everyone who has what I want happy? If some people who have what I want aren't happy, can I know for sure that getting what I want would make me happy? If I never experienced the particular outcome that I want, can I know for sure I will like it? Can I think of any possible new problems or "bad" effects of getting the outcome I want (for me or for others)? If so, then can I know for sure that this outcome would be "best" and make me happiest? Could someone else think that getting what I want wouldn't make me happiest? If others could have a different perspective, can I be absolutely certain that I know what outcome would be best?

*Ben: "I am sure some people who work there aren't happy. While I think that I will like the job a lot, I guess it is true that I can't know for sure that I will like it since I never actually worked there.*

*I might not like the job. I might not be good at it. It is possible that I won't like the people that work there. This job might give me more stress or require more hours of work than other jobs that I'm looking at. A new job opportunity that is perfect for me may come up in a month and I won't be able to take it if I already signed a contract with this job.*

*Some of my friends think that this job wouldn't be best for me.*

*While I do really want to get this job offer, the truth is that I don't know that this job would be best for me or make me happiest.*

*Just saying that to myself gives me such relief. I can breathe again. I don't have to worry about not getting the job offer because I really don't know whether that would be better or worse for my life."*

### **Step 5: Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering**

*Ben: "But if I don't stress about the interview then I won't work hard to prepare for it, which will hurt my chances of getting the job offer."*

### **"My anxiety and stress are helpful"**

Many of us seem to believe, "Fear, anxiety, and stress help me to achieve my goals". This belief is generally created by the fact that we have often arrived at our goals when we

have experienced anxiety along our pursuit. This has led us to believe that the anxiety helped. However, for most of us, this assumption has rarely been tested because we tend to have a very small frame of reference for performing actions towards goals without anxiety. It is true that fear *can* motivate us to take action. But, fear also has many counterproductive side effects, and the motivation it provides often isn't as strong as our motivation without fear. We have achieved outcomes we wanted in our life despite our stress, not because of it. Let's take a look at a few of the reasons why anxiety is more hurtful than helpful (more reasons in full book).

a) Stress makes doing the work needed to achieve our goal very unenjoyable. It becomes much harder to work for long amounts of time when we aren't enjoying ourselves. Effort doesn't feel like effort when we enjoy what we are doing. Without stress, we are much happier and much more able to work for longer periods of time towards our goals.

b) When we are experiencing anxiety, our attention is on thoughts of the future. This means our attention is not fully on this moment. Less attention on this moment means less energy given to this moment. Less energy given to our work in this moment makes us less efficient and worsens the quality of our work.

c) It becomes difficult to be happy, enjoy ourselves, and have enthusiasm for life when we feel stress. In addition, stress causes our bodies to contract and feel tense, making us more irritable. When this is our experience, others don't want to be around us nearly as much. We bring them down and aren't enjoyable to be around. This hurts our chances of getting promotions and working well as a member of a team, and it often hurts others' opinions of us.

d) It is very difficult to be creative and offer fresh insight when our attention is on thoughts of the future. Creativity arises from the space (silence) between thoughts and is therefore hard to come by when we are busy giving attention to the thoughts that are creating anxiety.

e) The reason why we have formed most of our goals is because we hope that achieving our goals will make us happy. We may think that we want success itself, but we really just want to be happy, and we happen to think that success is the best way to make ourselves happy. We may think that we want wealth itself, but we really just want wealth because we think it can make us happy in one way or another. We may think that we want approval from our parents, but we really just want this approval because we think it will make us feel worthy and whole. Achieving our goals is generally, albeit often unknowingly, just the means to try to make ourselves happy. Therefore, on the most fundamental level, when we claim, "Anxiety helps me achieve my goal", we are actually believing, "Anxiety helps me to become happy". If we recognize that we really just want to be hap-

py, then it wouldn't make sense to keep our anxiety just because we hope that it would help us to achieve our goal in the future, which we hope would make us happier.

**The Questions:** What "bad" outcome do I think will happen if I lose my anxiety? Am I absolutely sure that my anxiety is helpful at getting me what I want or preventing what I don't want from happening? Can I think of any reasons why not having anxiety might help me get what I want?

a) If I didn't have anxiety, wouldn't I enjoy my work towards achieving my goal much more, therefore enabling me to spend more time on it (i.e., it's hard to work when stressed)?

b) Wouldn't the quality and efficiency of my work improve if my full attention was given to what I was doing instead of to the thoughts that create my anxiety?

c) If I was happy (instead of stressed), wouldn't the people around me like me more, therefore helping me to get what I want (e.g., a new client or promotion)?

d) Isn't it easier to be creative and offer fresh insight when I am not giving attention to the thoughts that create my anxiety?

e) How do I expect to feel when I achieve my goal? Why do I want to achieve my goal? Can I admit that I really just want to achieve my goal because I think it will make me feel the way I want to feel? Is it true that my anxiety or stress helps to make me happy?

*Ben: "Without anxiety, I suppose that I would enjoy my studying for interviews more, which might help me to spend more time preparing for the interview. I would definitely be able to be more focused while preparing for interviews if I wasn't stressed. That might make me understand the information I'm learning more easily, and help me to prepare better answers to the questions they might ask. If I am not nervous and anxious while I'm at the interview, then I am highly likely to answer the questions better. The interviewer will probably like me more, and enjoy being around me more if I am relaxed and not filled with worry.*

*I guess not having anxiety might actually help me to get the job offer. Considering that, I definitely don't see any reason why I would want to keep my anxiety."*

## Example 2: Sam is ashamed about his job

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### **Step 1: Pick an unwanted emotion**

*Sam: "I am ashamed about my job."*

### **Step 2: Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion**

**What isn't "good enough" about me or my life? What aspect of my life am I ashamed or embarrassed about?**

*Sam: "It is bad that I am still working as a salesman and haven't been promoted to a corporate position."*

### **Step 3: Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances**

**Could I or someone else be happy despite having the same factual circumstances?**

Certain circumstances seem to create specific emotional responses. It seems obvious that some circumstances are responsible for creating sadness or anger, and other circumstances create happiness. However, in order to claim that a specific circumstance creates a specific experience, it must always create that same experience, for every person, every time. For example, a turned on light bulb creates light. Everyone who sees a turned on light bulb will experience light, every time, for as long as they are around the light bulb. A flame creates heat. When anyone comes into contact with a flame, they will experience heat every time, for as long as they are near the flame. Beating a drum creates sound. If any person moves near a beating drum, they will experience sound, every time, for as long as they are near the beating drum.

If specific circumstances created specific emotional reactions, each circumstance would always create the same emotional reaction, for everyone, every time. For example, if sickness directly created sadness, then everyone who gets sick would always have no choice but to be sad, and would have to be sad the whole time that they are sick. If a performance review at work created anxiety, then everyone would always experience anxiety before their reviews, and would have the anxiety in every moment before the review. If insults created anger, then everyone would always react with anger to every insult and have this anger for the same amount of time. Clearly, this isn't the way life works. The same circumstance often corresponds with different emotions for different people, the same emotion for different durations of time, and different emotions for the same person at different points in time. If two people are called "ugly", one person could get very up-

set, while the other could laugh it off. If two people are mugged at gunpoint, one person could be outraged at the violation, and the other could just be relieved he wasn't hurt. Sometimes it may drive us crazy when our roommates leave their dishes in the sink, and other times it may not bother us at all. If two men forget their wives' birthday, one wife might be upset for a few minutes, while the other wife could be angry at her husband for days. If the same circumstance can correspond with vastly different emotions, or the same emotion last for different amounts of time, then our emotions must not be created by the circumstances we encounter.

In addition, people can be happy in the midst of seemingly tragic events, and they can suffer amid seemingly great circumstances. If a family member dies, we can still be happy if we are glad to see their suffering end or we are looking forward to getting the inheritance. If we get fired from our job, we can be happy about it if we were looking for an excuse to leave or if we are excited about the possibility of finding a job that we love more. If our husband files for divorce, we can still be happy if we had stopped loving him but were scared to file for divorce ourselves or if we're looking forward to being single again. Similarly, we can worry about our financial security no matter how wealthy we are. We can feel unloved and sad even when our spouse and family truly love us. We can feel depressed about being overweight even if everyone else thinks we are thin. We can get angry at someone even if they treat us with love and kindness. We can feel ungrateful and incomplete even if we have almost everything we ever wanted.

We often tend to think that our shame or embarrassment is the result of our insufficient physical appearance, personality traits, marital status, job, car, or living situation. But when we were young children, almost all of us were happy (with no shame) regardless of how "bad" these circumstances were. If we used to be happy with a given circumstance, and now we are ashamed about the same circumstance, it must be our thoughts that are responsible for our shame.

If the "worst" of circumstances can leave us happy, and the "best" of circumstances can result in suffering, then it is clear that circumstances don't create our emotions. Circumstances themselves are neutral. The same circumstance often corresponds with different emotions for different people because we can all have different thoughts about the circumstance. Even if our emotional reaction happens immediately after an event and seems completely logical and connected to that event, it is still our thoughts that create our emotional reactions. There are always thoughts that arise between a circumstance and our emotional reaction to it. We rarely notice these thoughts because we haven't been directed to pay attention to them. Regardless of what the circumstance is, and regardless of whether the circumstance is happening now or in the past, it can only be our thoughts about the circumstance that create our emotions.

**The Questions:** Could someone else be happy despite having the same circumstance? Have I ever been happy or experienced a different emotion under the same conditions? If the circumstance itself created a specific emotional response, wouldn't it always produce the same emotional response for me and everyone else? Could I be happy in this situation if I had different thoughts about it? If someone else could be happy despite having the same seemingly "bad" circumstance, if I could be happy if I had different thoughts about the circumstance, or if I have been happy at one point with the same circumstance, can I admit that the circumstance itself is not creating my emotion?

*Sam: "Since many of my co-workers are happy in this job, and I am sometimes happy at my job, it must not be my job itself that is causing my shame. I realize that it must be my thoughts that are making me feel ashamed about my job.*

*If it's not my sales job that is making me feel ashamed, then I guess my happiness isn't dependent on getting the promotion. That means I can stop feeling so worried about if and when I will get the promotion!"*

#### **Step 4: Discover that you don't know whether your thought is true**

##### **Can I think of a few reasons or examples as to why the opposite might be true?**

Any time we are experiencing an emotion, it is because we are believing a thought to be true. Since we don't want to think of ourselves as "wrong", we unconsciously want to keep believing that we were "right" to believe our thought is true. Because of this dynamic, once we believe a thought, our minds generally only look for evidence that will support our thought. Doing this, of course, perpetuates our unwanted emotions.

For example, once we think, "My husband doesn't appreciate me", we may immediately see a bunch of images of past events projected in our mind that all help to prove our thought is true. We would only think of the times when we didn't get any praise from our husband, and we would not think of the times when he did give us praise. We might leave out key details of a story, like the fact that our husband didn't even know that we did something worthy of praise. If our minds think back to any time when he said "thank you", then we generally interpret that "thank you" to be said in an uncaring way.

The evidence we use to prove our thoughts to be true is almost always biased, almost always includes only memories that back up our claim, and is almost always based on whatever perspective or interpretation we think proves our point. This process of finding nothing but supportive evidence for our thoughts winds up strengthening our beliefs and intensifying our emotions.



Now that we know how our minds keep us believing thoughts, we can flip this process upside down in order to help us disbelieve our unwanted thoughts. Once we are aware of a thought we want to disbelieve, instead of looking for supportive evidence, all we have to do is look for a few possible reasons or examples as to why the opposite of our thought might be true. In other words, if we think a situation is “bad”, we can look for reasons or examples as to why it might be “good”. If we can find some genuine reasons or examples why the positive thought might be true, then this often makes us realize that we can’t be sure whether our negative thought is true.

If we think, “My boss is mean”, then we might be able to remember a few times when he was nice to us or others. If we think, “My job sucks”, we can try to remember all the aspects of our job that we like. If we think, “I am unworthy of anyone’s love”, then we can try to find a few reasons why we think someone would want to love us. If we have decided, “I don’t make enough money”, then we can look for a few reasons as to why we do actually have enough money. If we think, “My girlfriend said ‘thank you’ in an unappreciative way”, then we can try to find reasons why it is possible that we misread her intentions and that she was appreciative when she said it.

When we only look for evidence to prove that our negative thought is true, or only remember and think about the negatives of any situation, we will always be proved right and will inevitably suffer as a consequence. But it is almost always possible to come up with genuine reasons or examples why any situation, person, or event is positive. *When we are used to thinking of a circumstance as “bad”, it may take some effort, creativity, or even brutal honesty to find some reasons why the opposite thought might be true, but it is always possible.* It may even require a few minutes (or more) of thinking in order to find genuine reasons or examples as to why the opposite might be true. If we are able to recognize that the opposite of our thought could be true, this usually makes us realize that we can’t really be sure that our thought is true. Once we are able to recognize that we don’t know whether our thought is true, then the emotion our thought was creating naturally dissolves, or at least loses much of its power.

**The Questions:** Can I think of a few reasons or examples as to why the opposite might be true? If there are a few reasons or examples (memories) as to why the opposite thought might be true, can I be absolutely certain that my thought is true?

*Sam: “This job provides me with a salary that allows me to live comfortably and enjoy myself. I like some of my co-workers and we have fun at work sometimes. I really feel good when I am able to sell a client something that helps their business. And I am good at the job. It’s possible that I wouldn’t like the corporate position, I might not be as good at it, I might not like my co-workers as much, and it might require more hours of*

*work. I guess that it might not be bad at all to be in this job. It feels good to say that. It's like a big weight has been lifted off my chest. I can be happy about my job. I don't have to be ashamed that I'm a salesman because I actually like many things about my job."*

### **Step 5: Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering**

*Sam: "But if I don't consider my sales job to be bad then I am going to lose my motivation to get the promotion and will be end up settling here."*

### **"If I don't see my situation as bad, then this bad situation will remain the same and I will be settling"**

It can seem as if disbelieving the thought "my situation is bad" would stop us from pursuing our goals or cause us to remain in our "bad" situation. In fact, sometimes our minds can scare us into not questioning our thoughts just by telling us that we will end up "settling" in our "bad" situation if we decide to question our thoughts. However, this is far from the truth. An urge to change our situation can come directly from our intuition or can arise because we want to make ourselves happy. If we disbelieve our thought, "my situation is bad", then whether we choose to remain in our situation depends on where our urge came from.

a) Intuition appears as a light suggestion or subtle feeling of what to do, without providing any explanation behind its decision. Intuition is not an emotion, is not created by thoughts or our life history, and is completely separate from thought. Our intuition lets us know what feels right and true to ourselves, and then guides us toward actions that are aligned with these feelings. When our urge to change our situation comes from our intuition, then we almost certainly wouldn't lose our motivation to change our situation regardless of what thoughts we disbelieve. Since our intuition's guidance has nothing to do with our thoughts or our unhappiness, disbelieving our thoughts about how our current situation is "bad" or becoming happy in our current situation both wouldn't affect our urge to change our situation.

b) When we believe some version of, "My situation isn't good enough", this thought makes us unhappy in our current situation. Once these thoughts have made us unhappy, we are unknowingly motivated to try to change our situation solely because we believe that these changes to our life will make us happy. If our motivation to change our situation is solely based on our desire to be happy, and we are able to disbelieve the thoughts that have made us unhappy, then we may lose our interest in changing our situation or achieving our goal because we are now already happy.

This may sound discouraging, but if the only reason we wanted to change our situation or achieve a specific goal was to make ourselves happy (the ultimate goal), then we get to

be happy now instead of spending large amounts of time, money, and energy as we try to achieve our goal. This can't be considered "settling", because we are only choosing to remain in our situation because we are completely happy with the way it is. It is hard to imagine that staying in our "bad" situation wouldn't be "settling" only because we are unhappy in it right now. Take a moment right now to imagine how happy you would feel if you made your circumstances "perfect". Now imagine that you could be just as happy within your current situation. If you were as happy and peaceful as you want to be, then would you consider remaining in your current situation to be "settling"?

*If we aren't able to find peace and happiness in our current situation, then our desire to change our situation will naturally remain, regardless of where the urge comes from.*

If you think, "I shouldn't be in such a bad job", then you may feel ashamed of your job, and would therefore want to change your job in order to make yourself happy. If you disbelieve your thoughts about your job, then you may end up loving your job and being happy in it. If this happens, then choosing to stay in your job can no longer be considered "settling". If questioning your thoughts doesn't make you happy in your job (because you can't identify or disbelieve the thoughts that are making you unhappy), then you would still look to change your job. Similarly, if your original urge to leave your job came because you felt the job wasn't right for you (intuition), or you were being guided to a job you felt passionate about (intuition), then you would still want to leave your job and still feel motivated to pursue the new one even if you became happy in your job. These urges aren't created by thoughts, so they remain after our negative thoughts are disbelieved.

**The Questions:** If the urge to change my situation came from my intuition, then wouldn't this urge remain regardless of what thoughts I disbelieve? If the urge to change my situation came from my desire to be happy, then wouldn't I want to disbelieve the thoughts that are making me unhappy, since that would make me happy right now? Wouldn't I only want to remain in my current situation if I ended up being happy in it? If I wind up happy in my current situation, then can I really consider it "settling" to remain in my current situation?

*Sam: "If disbelieving my thought makes me happy in my sales job, I recognize that I may still have my motivation to get the promotion or I may just become content in this job. But, if I lose that motivation, I guess that means I only wanted the promotion so that I could be happy. If I just wanted to be happy, and I can be happier now, then I might as well choose happiness over shame. And if I don't become happy in my job then I am sure that I will still have my motivation to get promoted. Based on that, I don't see any reason why I would want to keep believing that my job is bad, which makes me feel ashamed about my life."*

## Example 3: Sandra is hurt that her boyfriend wants to leave her

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### **Step 1: Pick an unwanted emotion**

*Sandra: "I am hurt that my boyfriend wants to leave me."*

### **Step 2: Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion**

#### **What do I think their opinion signifies about me?**

*Sandra: "There is something wrong with me."*

### **Step 3: Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances**

#### **If I didn't know that the event had happened, would I still be suffering?**

Imagine that you went to the doctor for a routine medical test, and when you got back the results, you found out that you have a harmful disease. How do you think you would feel in that moment? You might feel anger, sadness, despair, or anxiety. What would have created your emotions in that moment? It would certainly seem as though the disease itself created the emotions. But, if the disease itself created sadness, then you would have felt sad as soon as you developed the disease. If you didn't know that you had the harmful disease, would you still experience sadness, anger, despair, anxiety about it? No. If you already have the disease, but yet don't experience an emotional reaction to it, this must mean that the disease itself (the circumstance) isn't what creates your emotions.

While it seems that circumstances directly create our emotions, we actually can't experience an emotion unless our minds know about the circumstance. In other words, we can't have an emotional reaction to a circumstance until we have thoughts about it. If an event itself directly created an unwanted emotion, the event would create the unwanted emotion as soon as it happened.

If a loved one is injured in a car accident while you are asleep, when would you experience an emotional reaction to this event? You would only start to feel sad once you found out what happened and could have thoughts about it. If your loved one's injury (the circumstance) directly created your sadness, then you would immediately experience sadness as soon as the event happened. If you wouldn't experience sadness until you started to think about what happened, then it has to be your thoughts that are creating your sadness.

In comparison, if you were asleep and someone poured water on your head without waking you up, your hair would still get wet. Your hair would get wet because water directly causes wet hair. If your hair didn't get wet until you woke up and thought, "Someone poured water on my hair", you would know that your thoughts were necessary in creating your wet hair. Clearly, a circumstance cannot create an emotional reaction without thoughts.

**The Questions:** Would I be suffering if I didn't know the event happened? If the circumstance wouldn't have created an emotion without my mind knowing what happened (thoughts), then can I admit that the circumstance itself doesn't have the power to create my emotion? If my thoughts can create my emotion with no event happening now (e.g., thinking about past or future), but an event can't create an emotion without my thoughts (mind knowing what happened), then can I admit that my thoughts have created my suffering, and not a circumstance?

*Sandra: "It seems as if I feel hurt because my boyfriend wants to leave me. But if he wanted to leave me, and didn't tell me, I wouldn't feel hurt. In fact, I'm sure that he has wanted to leave me for at least the last few days or weeks, but yet I didn't feel hurt by it. I only felt hurt once he told me how he feels. If his wanting to leave me directly created my feeling of being hurt, then I would have felt hurt ever since he decided in his mind that he wanted to leave me. But since I didn't feel hurt until he told me, I can admit that it must be my thoughts about him wanting to leave me that are causing me to feel hurt, and not just the fact that he doesn't want to be with me.*

*That recognition sort of gives me a sense of hope that I don't have to continue feeling hurt."*

#### **Step 4: Discover that you don't know whether your thought is true**

##### **Am I sure that their opinion about me is true?**

When someone says something positive about us (e.g., appreciation or approval), we generally experience some happiness or comfort and then believe the other person created it. When someone insults us, we often feel sad, angry, or ashamed, and then we believe that that person created our emotion. But is that true?

If you think, "I am terrible at my job", and then a stranger (who you know has never seen any of your work) tells you, "You're great at your job", is this likely to affect you? It is unlikely. On the other hand, if your boss told you, "You're great at your job", would this affect you? For most of us, this would yield at least a little bit of pleasure. So what's the difference between these two situations? Two people told us the same thing, they both had the same opinion about us, but yet only one of these opinions emotionally affected

us. The reason only one of the comments emotionally affected us is that we only believed one of them. Since the stranger had never seen our work, we didn't believe his opinion. If we don't believe someone else's opinion, that opinion cannot emotionally affect us. Since our boss has seen us work, we will probably believe his opinion about us, which will improve our opinion of ourselves, and then create the corresponding feeling of pleasure.

What this shows us is that other people don't have the power to emotionally affect us. Others' words and opinions do not create our emotions. Our emotions are only created by our thoughts about ourselves. *If we don't believe someone else's opinion, then it won't have the power to change our opinion of ourselves, and therefore won't emotionally affect us.* The only way that someone else's insult or compliment can impact us is if we believe that what they say about us is true.

Let's look at another example of how this plays out in our lives. Please take a moment to imagine a stranger whose opinion you are highly unlikely to trust (e.g. a homeless person, politician, or teenager). If you think, "I am worthy of love", and then this random untrustworthy stranger on the street tells you, "You're unworthy of love", would their opinion emotionally impact you? It might annoy you a little, but it almost certainly wouldn't affect your opinion of yourself or create any serious emotional impact, because you are unlikely to believe this person's opinion to be trustworthy. But if your boyfriend or girlfriend of a few years were to tell you, "You're unworthy of love", do you think that would emotionally affect you? You are likely to feel hurt. In this situation, you are likely to believe that your partner's opinion is true maybe because their love played a large part in helping you to believe, "I am worthy of love" in the first place, or because you think their opinion is credible since you've spent a lot of time with them. Once you believe their opinion to be true, that would shift your opinion of yourself towards unworthiness. And when your opinion of yourself worsens, you experience the feeling of being hurt.

It's not your partner who created this hurt; it's not even their opinion that created it. If the opinion, "You're unworthy of love", directly created your feeling of hurt, then the stranger's opinion would have had the same emotional impact on you as your partner's opinion. Your hurt was created simply by your belief – your thought – that their opinion is true.

Others' opinions themselves do not have the power to emotionally affect us. When we believe someone's opinion to be true, it simply changes our thoughts about ourselves. When our thoughts about ourselves worsen, we feel hurt and we suffer. If we don't want to be emotionally affected by other people's opinions of us, all we need to do is recognize that we don't actually know whether someone's opinion about us is true. It would seem

obvious that we can't know whether someone's opinion is true, but we very easily lose sight of this as we go through life.

If our partner insults us or breaks up with us, we tend to think that there's something "wrong" with us. If our boss insults us or fires us, we are likely to believe that we aren't "good enough". If our parents disapprove of us, we might believe that we're unworthy or insufficient. In other words, when someone else believes that we aren't "perfect", we often believe them. To understand the flaw in this logic, let's look at a quick analogy. Imagine you are with your four-year-old son as he plays one of his games at home. He has several wooden shapes that he is trying to place in matching holes on a wooden board. Now imagine that your son picks up a square shape and tries to put it in a triangle-shaped hole, and then says to you, "Daddy, the square isn't good enough for this hole". What would you say to him? Probably something like, "Sweetie, just because the square doesn't fit, it doesn't mean that the square isn't good enough or that there is something wrong with it".

The same is true with all of our relationships in life. If someone breaks up with us, fires us, or disapproves of us, that simply means we don't fit *their* definition of "perfect". To go back to the analogy, this means we don't fit in the shape of *their* hole. Just because we don't fit one person's definition of "perfect", it doesn't mean we aren't "good enough", or that there is something "wrong" with us.

We can't be "not good enough" and there can't be something "wrong" with us because there is no such thing as "good enough" or "wrong". Each of us has completely different definitions of what we think is "good" and "bad", "right" and "wrong", "helpful" and "harmful", "beautiful" and "ugly". What one guy finds unattractive, another one may find attractive. What one girl thinks is annoying, another girl may love. What one boss finds unhelpful, another boss may find helpful. What one boss believes is a "bad" trait, another boss may value. What one mom thinks is a ridiculous career choice, another mom may be proud of. What one dad may think is a disappointing house, another dad may be proud of.

Is one person's definition of "right", "good", or "attractive" somehow more correct or more true than others' definitions? If someone thinks one of our characteristics is "bad" or "not good enough", this just means we fit *that person's concept* of those words. It doesn't mean *we are* these concepts.

What this means is that nobody can hurt you. Only you can hurt you. You don't feel hurt because someone stops loving you or rejects you, you feel hurt because of what you think that means about you. When you believe someone else's opinion about you to be true, you suffer. This means you don't have to get everyone in your life to think you're "great"



in order to be happy. All you have to do to stop suffering is just question whether you know that someone else's opinion about you is true.

**The Questions:** Am I sure that their opinion about me is true? Could someone else have a different perspective than theirs? If so, can I really be sure that their perspective is true? Am I sure that something about me isn't "good enough", or is it just that I happen to fit their specific definition of this word? Is it true that just because I care about this person, their opinion is somehow more valid than other people's opinions? Can I think of any reasons or examples as to why the opposite of their opinion might be true? If so, then can I know with absolute certainty that their opinion about me is true?

*Sandra: "My boyfriend must want to leave me because he thinks I am not good enough for him. It seems that he is right because he would only want to leave me if there was something wrong with me.*

*Other people have wanted to be with me, and many people think that I am great. If other people can think that I am great or a 'catch', I can't be sure that there is something wrong with me just because one person thinks I am not good enough.*

*I do want my boyfriend to think I am good enough more than I want other people to think it, but I can see that just because I care about him more than other people, it doesn't mean his definition of 'good enough' is truer or more valid than other peoples' definition.*

*That means it's not really true that there is something wrong with me or that I'm not good enough just because he doesn't want to be with me. I must just not be the right fit for him.*

*As soon as I said 'there's nothing wrong with me', I started to smile and immediately felt noticeably happier."*

### **Step 5: Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering**

*Sandra: "I don't want to keep feeling hurt."*

## Example 4: Amanda is sad that her husband doesn't appreciate her

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### **Step 1: Pick an unwanted emotion**

*Amanda: "I am sad and angry that my husband doesn't appreciate me."*

### **Step 2: Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion**

#### **What do they think of me?**

*Amanda: "My husband doesn't appreciate me."*

### **Step 3: Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances**

#### **Am I able to be happy (have fun) when I am being entertained and distracted from my thoughts?**

If a "bad" circumstance itself creates a specific unwanted emotion, then as long as we have that same "bad" circumstance, we would not be able to escape the specific unwanted emotion that the circumstance creates. If our unattractiveness directly creates our sadness, then we wouldn't be able to escape this sadness as long as we are unattractive. If our "bad" relationship creates our unhappiness, then we wouldn't be able to feel happy while still being in the relationship. If our "bad" job causes our feeling of shame, then we wouldn't be able to have a break from this shame as long as we are in our "bad" job.

However, in life, regardless of how "bad" our circumstances are, often all it takes to stop feeling one of our unwanted emotions is to simply engage in our favorite hobbies or some form of entertainment. It may seem that our unattractiveness directly creates our sadness, but all we need to do to stop feeling sad is turn on one of our favorite TV shows. It may seem that our "bad" relationship creates our unhappiness, but all we need to do to stop feeling unhappy is to go dancing. It may seem as if our "bad" job is creating our shame, but all we need to do to stop feeling ashamed is to go play with our children.

No matter how "bad" our circumstances are, and no matter what unwanted emotion we are experiencing, we generally stop feeling the unwanted emotion when we are playing with our children, watching TV, dancing, playing music, doing yoga, eating delicious food, or playing sports. So why are we able to stop experiencing our unwanted emotions and have fun (be happy) just by entertaining ourselves? This happens simply because entertainment distracts us from the negative thoughts that are actually creating our suffer-

ing. If a “bad” circumstance created our unwanted emotion, then we wouldn’t be able to escape the unwanted emotion simply by distracting ourselves from our thoughts.

If our “bad” circumstance still exists, but yet we can make ourselves happy purely by distracting ourselves from our negative thoughts, then it must be our thoughts that are creating our unhappiness.

**The Questions:** What distractions do I normally engage in to escape my emotion (e.g., alcohol, food, entertainment, hobbies, etc.)? If I can be happy when I am distracted from my thoughts, even though the “bad” circumstance still exists, then can I admit that my “bad” circumstance is not causing my unhappiness?

*Amanda: “When I am out with my friends, at the movies, or doing yoga, I can definitely still enjoy myself. Even though my problems with my marriage still exist, I can still be happy when I’m not thinking about it. This does make it pretty clear that it must be my thoughts that are creating my unhappiness about the marriage, not the marriage itself.*

*Just admitting that my husband isn’t to blame for my sadness already seems to alleviate some of my resentment towards him.”*

#### **Step 4: Discover that you don’t know whether your thought is true**

**Am I absolutely sure that my guess about their thoughts, feelings, or intentions is true?**

When we believe positive thoughts about ourselves, we experience some happiness or confidence. When we believe many negative thoughts about ourselves, we experience sadness, sense of incompleteness, and feelings of unworthiness. So how do we try to create positive thoughts about ourselves? It’s not as easy as just changing the thought “I am unlovable” to “I am lovable”, “I am boring” to “I am fun”, or “I am ugly” to “I am attractive”. One of the main ways we look to improve our self-image is by trying to find other people to convince us to think more positively about ourselves.

Since we look to others’ opinions to improve our opinion of ourselves and make us happy, we are frequently trying to figure out what others are thinking about us. We can’t actually know what others are thinking, but since we care so much about their opinions, we just guess what they’re thinking and then unknowingly assume our guess to be true. Most of us tend to experience a large amount of anxiety, hurt, and disappointment just from these guesses about what others think of us.

One of the most common ways that we try to figure out what others are thinking is by asking ourselves, “What would I have to be thinking for me to act like that?” In other

words, we look at the way *WE* think to figure out the way others think. We think, “Why would I have acted that way? What would cause me to act that way? What would my intentions have to be for me to act like that (or say that)?” *Once we figure out what we would be thinking if we were in their shoes, we believe that is what they are thinking because we unknowingly assume that other people think in the same way that we think.* This may seem to be a reasonable strategy, but it rarely works, because other people often think differently from the way we do and often value different things.

Suppose your boyfriend calls you every couple of days. You may think to yourself, “If I were in his place and loved my girlfriend, I would want to talk to her every day. Therefore, he *must* not love me”. You may express your love by telling your partner, “I love you”, being affectionate, calling often, always choosing to spend time with him over friends, buying gifts, or doing chores for him. So when your partner doesn't do one of these things, you may make a leap of logic and think, “If he loved me, he would do [that thing]. He *must* not love me”. Then you feel upset because you can't have what you want (your partner's love), or you feel angry because you think it is “bad” that your partner doesn't love you. We feel these emotions and many others as if we know other people's thoughts, even though we have no idea whether our guess about their thoughts is true. Your partner could love you just as much as you love him, but just express his love differently from the way you do.

We make these sorts of leaps of logic in all types of situations. If our date or friend shows up late to meet us, we may think, “If I care about a person, I always make sure to be punctual and not keep them waiting. He *must* not care about me”. But even though *we* might only show up late if we don't care about a person, others may have a hard time being punctual for everyone and for even the most important of events. If our boss says “thank you” once a week, we might think, “When I appreciate someone, I always let them know by saying ‘thank you’. He *must* not appreciate me”. Others, though, may not have been trained to say “thank you” routinely, even when they feel appreciative of someone. What's more, if they don't care a lot about receiving clear expressions of appreciation, approval, or love from other people, then they may not think it is important to express those sentiments to others, may not remember to give these expressions to others, and may be completely unaware that the people in their life don't feel appreciated, approved of, or loved.

Asking ourselves the question, “What would I need to be thinking for me to choose to act that way?” is clearly not an accurate way to determine others' intentions or opinions about us. Once we recognize that a different interpretation is possible, then we can recognize that we really don't know whether our interpretation is true. When this recognition

occurs, we lose our reason to be upset. Therefore, the suffering that our thought had been causing fades away.

**The Questions:** What are the facts and what is my interpretation of the facts? Have I interpreted the facts based on what I would be thinking if I acted that way? Am I sure that they express their feelings or choose their actions in the same way as I do? Is it possible that he doesn't express his love, approval, or appreciation in the way I am looking for it because he doesn't feel the need to receive love, approval, or appreciation in that way? Am I sure that they are aware of the emotional effect their words or actions have on me? Can I think of some other possible ways to interpret this situation? If so, can I be absolutely sure that my guess about their thoughts, feeling, or intentions is true?

*Amanda: "Well, the facts are that he rarely says 'thank you' or 'I appreciate that', never brings me flowers anymore, and doesn't help with cleaning the house. I guess my interpretation is that 'these actions mean he doesn't appreciate me'. It definitely seems like my interpretation is true and that he must not appreciate me.*

*Maybe those are the ways I want him to show appreciation, but not the ways that he thinks to express it. It might be signs of appreciation that he pays for our mortgage, and that he pays for my food and yoga classes, amongst other things. He has bought me a few presents in the last year. He compliments me sometimes. Sometimes I can see he appreciates me by the way he looks at me.*

*Maybe he does appreciate me and just doesn't show it in the ways I was looking for it. Just saying that makes me feel lighter and more relaxed. Maybe my marriage is just fine the way it is. It was just my thoughts about my husband that made me feel that it wasn't good enough, and in-turn made me feel sad and resentful. I really feel much better about it now. It's nice not to have to worry about that anymore."*

**Step 5: Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering**

*Amanda: "I have no reason to continue suffering"*

## Example 5: Ted is upset that his wife divorced him

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### Step 1: Pick an unwanted emotion

*Ted: "I am upset that my wife divorced me."*

### Step 2: Identify the thoughts behind your unwanted emotion

#### What "bad" outcome happened?

*Ted: "It is bad that my wife divorced me."*

### Step 3: Recognize that your emotion has been created by your thoughts and not your circumstances

#### What are the facts and what are my thoughts about the facts?

We generally don't realize it, but we constantly form thoughts about circumstances and then unknowingly consider these thoughts to actually be part of the facts. For example, we may think, "I *am* ugly", "He *is* mean", "This situation *is* terrible", "Her actions *were* inappropriate", or "He *doesn't* appreciate me". We generally consider these thoughts to be no different from facts such as "her name *is* Amanda", "that *is* an apple", "my house *is* red", or "I *am* six feet tall". We innocently and often unknowingly think these thoughts as if they are facts and then conclude that our emotions were created by these "facts". However, the thoughts mentioned above are not facts. They are thoughts about facts.

Imagine you are waiting in line for a cup of coffee, then a man says to you, "Get out of my way", as he tries to cut through the line to get to the seating area. Now imagine that this incident leaves you a little angry at the man. What would have caused our anger in this situation? Most of us would naturally think, "His disrespectful words caused my anger". In other words, it seems as though the facts themselves created our anger. But what were the facts and what were our thoughts about the facts? The only facts were the words "get out of my way". It is not as though his words were factually disrespectful; his words were just his words, completely neutral. Therefore he didn't speak "disrespectful words"; we just had a *thought* about his words that says, "That is disrespectful".

Our thoughts have nothing to do with his words (the facts). They are two separate things. *They exist in two completely separate places. His words were spoken in front of us and detected through our senses, whereas our thought "that is disrespectful" only exists as a concept in our mind.* Our emotion is created by the concept (thought), not by the facts.

Our emotion is caused by what is going on in our minds, not by what is going on in front of us. Our anger is caused by the thought “that is disrespectful”, not by the words “get out of my way”. If we didn’t have this thought about his words, we would experience no emotional reaction to them.

We consistently label people, actions, words, situations, and events as “bad”, “not good enough”, or “wrong”. We say, “She *is* annoying”, “She *is* boring”, and “She *is* ugly” as if they were facts. Then we experience an emotional reaction to these labels, and we treat ourselves and others according to them. But what are the facts and what are our thoughts about the facts? A girl can’t *be* “mean”, “boring”, or “ugly”. These concepts are not part of the facts. Someone can only perform actions or speak words, which our thoughts then label as “boring” or “annoying”. “Boring” and “annoying” can’t be seen and can’t be touched. Any concept that certain words or actions are “boring” or “annoying” only exists as thoughts in our own minds.

It may seem as if “ugly” can be seen and touched. Think about it, though: a face, eyes, a nose, and hair can be seen and touched. These are not “ugly”, these are only body parts. After we witness a body part through our senses, we then have the thought “her nose *is* ugly”. Her nose can’t *be* “ugly”, her nose can only be her nose. “Ugly” is just a thought about her nose. Our thought is completely separate from the facts.

Similarly, we tend to believe thoughts like “my life shouldn’t be like this”, “he shouldn’t have done that”, or “I should be different”. We believe these thoughts as if they are true, so they tend to run our lives and create a lot of shame and anger. But where does “should” exist? Can you see it or touch it? Is it really a rule written in stone somewhere that must be followed? The whole idea of “should” is just a concept that only exists in our minds. It is not a fact that we really should act a certain way, our life should be a certain way, or they should act a certain way. Our actions and our lives are just what they are. Any idea that they should be different doesn’t exist anywhere but as a thought in our own mind.

Facts are what we know to be true. What we directly experience through our senses are the facts. The facts are reality. Then we superimpose our ideas of “good” and “bad”, “right” and “wrong”, “should” and “shouldn’t” onto reality and claim those ideas are facts. Facts are completely neutral. Reality just is. Reality doesn’t have a perspective. Nothing can be factually “bad” or “not good enough”, and nothing “should” be a certain way, because facts don’t contain perspectives within them.

Once we can see that part of what we considered to be facts is actually just our thoughts about the facts, then we can begin to recognize that our emotions are created by our thoughts and not by facts. Only then does it become possible to start questioning whether

these thoughts are really true. Reality itself is freedom. It's only our thoughts about reality that create all of our suffering and discontent.

**The Questions:** Does “bad” exist as part of the facts, or is it just part of my thoughts about the facts? Can I see, hear, or touch the “bad” of something or someone, or is the “bad” of something or someone just thoughts about what I see, hear, and touch? Is “bad” physically located outside or only in my own mind? Does the idea of how things “should” be exist anywhere other than as a thought in my own mind? Is my emotion being created directly by the facts or is it created by my thoughts about the facts?

*Ted: “The facts are that my wife divorced me. I guess my thoughts about the facts are ‘it is bad that wife divorced me’. I can see that the ‘badness’ of the divorce doesn’t exist as part of the facts, and I can’t see, hear, or touch this ‘badness’. It is hard to admit, but I recognize that my idea that my divorce is bad only exists in my mind. So my emotion must be created by my thought and not by the facts.*

*Now that I admit that, it is actually a bit of a relief because that means I can be happy even though I am divorced.”*

#### **Step 4: Discover that you don’t know whether your thought is true**

#### **Do I know for sure that this circumstance is “bad” for my life and won’t have some “good” effects?**

Let’s say you break your leg. You would consider that to be “bad”, right? Now imagine that while you are sitting in the doctor’s waiting room with your broken leg, you meet the man who eventually becomes your loving husband and the father of your children. Considering this, would you now consider it to have been “good” or “bad” for your life that you broke your leg? You would almost certainly consider the broken leg to have been “good” for your life. In isolation, you decided that the broken leg was “bad”, but after experiencing its “good” overall effect on your life, you would now consider it to be “good” that you broke your leg.

In the same way, as we go through life, events that seem “bad” can always wind up having many “good” effects and end up being “good” for our life overall. Since we don’t know all of the effects of any circumstance, we don’t really know whether any circumstance is “good” or “bad” for our life.

Whenever we consider a circumstance or outcome in our life to be “bad”, we are only judging it based on the immediate effect that we are aware of (e.g., the pain or inconvenience of a broken leg). But one cause does not have only one effect. We may think that a specific circumstance or outcome is “bad” and will make us suffer, but there are count-



less effects that could arise from any one outcome or circumstance in our lives. Then there are countless effects of each one of those effects. We have no idea what all of the effects of any event will be for ourselves and others (long-term or short-term).

If we just acknowledge that a specific “bad” outcome in our life could have “good” effects, then we can recognize that we really don’t know whether the “bad” circumstance will make us happier overall in the long run. In other words, we can recognize that we don’t really know whether the “bad” circumstance is “bad” for our life. Now let’s look at some examples of how this dynamic can play itself out.

We may think that having our partner cheat on us, getting injured, getting a low grade, or discovering that our child is using drugs is “bad”. But could the cheating provide us with the incentive to change something about ourselves, force a conversation that improves the relationship, or give us the courage to leave? Could getting injured result in our having the time to read a book that changes our lives, taking a test that detects cancer early, or helping us realize how much the people in our lives love us? Could a low exam score teach us that we need to study differently, show us that this topic isn’t right for us, or spur us to change a lifestyle that’s not conducive to learning? Could our child’s drug use lead him to realize that drug use can’t make him happy, scare him into changing his life, or help to teach others how not to live?

These possible effects may seem realistic or they may seem highly unlikely, but the fact is that they are all possible. *When we label a circumstance “bad”, we are making an uninvestigated assumption that the circumstance or event will make us unhappy or less happy.* But the bottom line is, for every seemingly “bad” circumstance, there can be many “good” effects that wind up making us happier. When we decide that a circumstance is “bad” just because we are aware of a few seemingly “bad” effects, we are ignoring all of the possible “good” effects that could come from it.

Haven't you been through an event in the past that you thought was “bad” at the time but ended up working out “great”? This happens all the time. But we don’t have to wait until long after an event in order to realize that we don’t know whether it is “good” or “bad”. As soon as an event occurs, we can see that we don’t know whether it is “good” or “bad” if we just allow ourselves to admit that we can’t possibly know what all of the effects will be. If we can just admit that our “bad” circumstance could wind up having “good” effects or could help to make us happier in the long run, then we can stop believing our circumstance *is* “bad”.

If we believe, “It is bad that I got cheated on, got injured, got a low exam score, or missed my train”, then we will likely experience sadness, shame, or anger. But if we can admit that we don’t know with absolute certainty whether an event is “bad” for our life,

then we can acknowledge, “I don’t know for sure that it is bad”. When we don’t know whether an event is “good” or “bad” for our life, then we don’t know whether it was “good” or “bad” that it happened. Once we see this, we have stopped believing our thought “this is bad” to be true, thereby freeing us from whatever suffering this thought had been creating.

**The Questions:** Do I know all of the effects of this circumstance, and all of the effects of those effects? Can I think of a few possible “good” effects that could come from this “bad” circumstance? (be creative). Is it possible that this “bad” circumstance could lead to “positive” effects in the future that wind up making me (or others) happier? Is it possible that this circumstance is exactly what I (or others) need in order to learn a lesson that will make me (or them) happier in the future? If I can remember a time in the past when I thought a circumstance was “bad” but it ended up working out really well, then can't it happen again? If I don’t know whether this “bad” circumstance will make me happier or not in the long run, then isn’t it true that I don’t know whether this circumstance is “good” or “bad” for my life?

*Ted: “I definitely don’t know what all of the possible effects of getting divorced are. It is possible that I will find someone else who I will enjoy even more, it is possible that I will enjoy being a bachelor, I may like the freedom of living by myself, I may be able to relax a little more because I don’t have to worry so much about trying to make my wife happy, it may give me the opportunity to go places and do things that I wouldn’t have otherwise done, and I may be able to give more time and energy to my job which may get me promoted.*

*While I did like being married to my wife, I have to admit that it is possible that I will be happier in the future without her. And considering that she wanted to divorce me, she will probably be happier with someone else in her life.*

*I can remember many times in my past that I thought an event was really bad, but in the long run, it turned out well. Considering all of this, I can acknowledge that I really don’t know whether it was good or bad for my life that my wife divorced me.*

*Wow, I really just stopped feeling upset. That’s amazing. The truth is that it may be good for my life in the long run that I got divorced. It feels great to just admit that and acknowledge that.”*

### **Step 5: Question the validity of any reason to continue suffering**

*Ted: “I don’t see any reason why I would want to stay upset”*

# Applying The 5 Steps to The Present Moment

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Since almost all of us were taught that circumstances create happiness and suffering, and weren't taught how to address the thoughts that are making us unhappy we are all in the same boat of being dissatisfied. Our lack of peace is not a personal issue.

When we experience an unwanted emotion, our immediate reaction is to blame it on something about ourselves, others, or our situation. But now that we know how to question our thoughts, we can begin to change this habit. As we become more accustomed to questioning our thoughts, our old habit of trying to change circumstances to make ourselves happy becomes replaced with the new habit of questioning thoughts any time we aren't happy. We begin to focus on our own reaction instead of what person, situation, or event we believe is to blame for our reaction. As we question our thoughts more, the process becomes much easier and quicker, and ultimately becomes second nature.

There is no need to try to make the decision as to whether you want to apply The 5 Steps to every emotion or every thought you ever have in the future. There is no need to try to figure out how The 5 Steps apply to everyone and everything. The only relevant questions are those that apply to the thought that's taking your attention right now: "How do I feel when I think the thought? How do I treat myself and others when I believe this thought? How would I feel and act without the thought? Do I want to be happy or do I want to suffer? Do I want to treat others with love or with hate?" That's it.

If you would like more help engaging with this process to help you live in the moment, you can:

- 1) Buy the full book "A Guide to The Present Moment" on Amazon by clicking [here](#).
- 2) Access the FREE interactive web app "The 5 Steps to The Present Moment" [here](#). This web app will help you to simply and easily go through The 5 Steps on your own.
- 3) Check out my video blog [here](#). The blog contains an ever-increasing number of videos and written explanations for how to live in the moment.
- 4) Setup a 1-on-1 counseling session with me on Skype [here](#).

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