

RECLAIM YOURSELF

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5. THE CURE OF WORRY

It is not that one worries *about* a problem—worry *is* the only problem. Stress, depression, ill health and even death are the results of worry. Once the mind learns how to worry, it worries more efficiently and frequently. Worry makes the mind unhealthy, and a host of consequences follow this unnecessary habit.

It is not difficult to see that worrying can never improve anything; why then do you worry at all?

Worry is a vicious circle, it has no real purpose, logic, benefit or goal. The mind runs in a circle and it is like a feeding frenzy of thought devouring thought, and you feel trapped in this maze. Worry is a reaction to a feeling about something which has no basis in reality at all. It is not instinct or intuition, as both of these only surface when there is a real situation. There is a world of difference between reaction of habit and the response of instinct.

Instinct is a prompting to action needed in the moment. A real situation arises and it seems that the whole being rises into action. There is no room for thought or deliberation in instinct. Instinct could be rooted in many things. There could be a real personal danger, and this could extend to danger sensed for loved ones; and if one is truly spiritual in character, to a pressing need felt about others which can be remedied by some action without concern for personal safety or the resulting consequences. This evolved soul will literally give the shirt off his back and more—he will do what needs to be done if a need is felt for any other—be they human or any other species. His vision is not exhausted by a small pitiable circle of interest and so he is free to respond to any need; and requisite energy comes into him for this task. He does not rise into action—the environment surges *through* him to correct or remedy something within itself.

I mention these things to illustrate that worry does not arise when there is a real situation at all—you are one with the danger and you just act! The reason many find it difficult to act is because of the interference of thought or worry. You may think it wise to think about personal safety before responding, but where does this end? There is some amount of 'giving' we have to do for any getting—there are no free lunches anywhere.

So we calculate and see the numbers while we are faced with situations; and the gravity of the situation is never seen in its own light, as the numbers (*values which are designed to*

always be in your personal favor) always tell you what you are amidst. This is why those who rise to the call of duty—doing what must be done—are looked upon as heroes. They did not do something extraordinary—their sense of ordinariness was universal and not *self-centered*.

Once we are in the habit of looking at numbers as an overlay on the situation, we see less of all situations and begin seeing our numbers more. We remove our own selves from reality which is right in front of us every minute because we are overly concerned about the numbers or calculations in our favor.

The beautiful and natural mechanism of direct perception dismantles as the new 'me first' establishes as a transparency through which we perceive. We gradually die to the one reality which is ever fresh, self-cleansing and directly in front of us each minute and begin to live in a world of thought—all the 'what if's' which are based completely on 'me first' or selfishness.

Selfishness is living by calculating personal loss or gain and by not living in the moment. We think that taking care of 'me first' is taking care of 'me', but this is not true at all—the reverse is the case. When we get self-centered and calculating, it is impossible to really see the situation because the number overlay gets the focus. You can only focus clearly on one thing in depth, but this blurs when we run the numbers. These numbers are based on ideas of who we think we are—one person, married or unmarried with some stuff, trying to make it in this huge world where everybody has the same general idea.

By feeling this way, you become more self-centric and smaller. The smaller you are, the larger is the world. The larger is the world, the more you have to think about how to make it or survive in the jungle out there. But it is not a world or a jungle out there—it is life and you are very much a part of it—you are one with it. The separation caused by initial selfishness snowballs into a bifurcation of yourself from your own larger existence—all of nature and everything.

As we get good at looking at the numbers, we may make more money because we are shrewd and see angles and opportunities others do not see. True, you may make a few more measly dollars but you at once subscribe to a magazine of misery—it is most difficult to unsubscribe from.

By any definition, the disease is self-centeredness—selfishness only. Soon, the condition worsens and we compulsively begin looking at numbers even when situations are not present. This is worry! Calculating and re-calculating and unnecessarily subjecting ourselves to stress. One's world recedes from the galaxies to the environment to the inner environment or inner environment—the world of the numbers which we have become one

with. Though flashing the corporate or social smile, we are really at ends with everything and everyone.

Though moving in the world, we interact with our own inner world of thought and rip ourselves away from the world which we are very much a part of—we dissect ourselves from reality and become so small in order to take care of ‘me first’.

We become businessy and cold in our relationships, seeing ourselves as professionals first. Professionals in what, may I ask? Being a money-making machine is far from being a professional. A real professional is an expert at something or many things without paying the cost of being human—he is an expert in living. The dictionaries of the day would not agree with this definition and relegate professionals to highly salaried people—regardless of the cost of loss in humanness.

Worry is the living in a world of inner chatter that we have somehow adopted in place of an ever fresh reality which is so beautiful and new each moment. The thought world is not big nor is it beautiful, and this is why life becomes a burden; and even though we move here and there, travel globally and communicate more—we actually share less because of the numbers or self-interests.

Little children do not worry—none of nature worries—about their next meal. They still get well taken care of. These examples can be taken to the extreme, but that is not the intention. Little children are naturally happy, and animals do not harbor grudges until they are domesticated and robbed of their naturalness.

When the mind is dominated by one single thought—how to take care of ‘me’, it becomes restless, as taking care of me in all situations requires the mind to work continually. When pressing situations are not present, the mind conjures them and shadow-boxes like a boxer within its own ring. The turmoil of worry is the punches and jabs the worrying mind inflicts on the mental creations within itself—and we start hurting ourselves.

As stress develops, release becomes necessary; but release, though it produces some gain, does not change the cause and the disc returns to earlier tracks. Sleep, which is such a natural and beautiful thing, requires all kinds of props and ambiance. Worry dampens our spirits, and cheer becomes something to see suspiciously—as we wonder what is there to be happy about? Anxiety is not worry, it follows as an effect. Worry is what happens when the mind is dominated by one single thought—me!

One has to see all this and resolve to leave this completely for natural happiness and joy to once again be felt in the heart. These are already there, but they are covered by clouds of our own making which rain and thunder stormily. Just as sunshine is obscured on a rainy

or cloudy day—the gloom of worry caused by ‘me first’ eclipses joy abundant which is ever present.

Here are a few simple rules to once again feel what you have never truly lost but have come to believe so—natural happiness and peace:

1. HAVE A CLEAR, DEFINITE GOAL OF LIFE

One single goal that guides all activities in all fields of life. This will take out the extra thinking of what rulebook to apply. Ambiguous goals like being happy or living a good life do not work as the mind has a lot of play in the meaning and application. Be bold! Choose perfection or self-realization as your goal and lighthouse. But you cannot be a half-baked potato that tries—trying is crying. All aspects of you have to be on board and the old you has to give the keys of the car of your life to your aspiration. You can do it if you will!

2. HAVE A CLEAR PLAN OF LIFE

Okay, you have taken the first step, and perfection of self-realization is your goal. The heart, the mind and body have to be rewired so they function in light of this new goal. For this, you will have to have both a clear plan and a way of self-accountability—like keeping a daily diary. What are all the activities that must be done to allow your aspiration to take *firm root*? There must be regular *sadhana* or spiritual practices and the other activities must be in accordance with the new goal. A diary will be like a doctor’s chart, as you must be the physician of your own soul.

3. EVERY MOMENT IS A OPPORTUNITY

Each morning when you awaken, you have two bank accounts that are available—use them or lose them. The first account is time; everyone gets the same 24 hours. If you feel that you get less, examine your priorities and adjust. The second is energy; everyone gets the same abundance. If you feel that you have less, look at your current health and habits and fix this.

Every moment, we are faced with a new opportunity for some activity. If we learn to look at external and internal situations without partiality to either, we will be able to see what lies in front of us and watch the rise of habit—then act in the light wisdom and leave the unwanted habit behind. This requires eternal vigilance, and it can come about if you sense the danger of habit steering your life. See all activity as a means to chisel the inner granite of habit and act expertly to reveal the ever revealed.

4. DO ONE THING AT ONE TIME

This applies to the simplest of things like eating your meal as well (no reading, watching TV or checking *any* mail) so you learn to give yourself fully to the present. You will not only realize that you can eat less but you will digest your food better, be conscious of what you eat and really enjoy the meal. Through this, you will develop your will power and relearn how to do what you set out to do. Apply this to all activity and see the results.

5. BE THOROUGH IN ALL THINGS

Everything done, however small or for one's own family must be done in the best way possible. Thoroughness is often lost in the closest circles as 'they will understand', though this is not true—they tolerate. Lack of thoroughness is carelessness and leads to callousness. It is also the cause of much worry, as we soon discover that something could have been done better if not for either worry about the past which is long buried, or the future which is imagination only. You cannot worry about the present—it demands action and you act. Learn to do everything as if it had your signature on it and was displayed in public. You will experience great joy as the wanton activity of the mind is gradually slowed.

6. FINISH ALL THINGS THAT YOU START

Right at starting, you must have a plan to complete what is started and a way of self-accountability. Seeing things through will give you tremendous confidence to take on more. Your accomplishments and thereby your capabilities will rise and you will feel that you can bring about change wherever needed. Procrastination is the thief of time, confidence and will power. Start with what you have on your hands now and look for things that have waited the longest, and finish them or discard them if they are unnecessary. We are not getting into a rat race but resolving to do methodically a little each day of what needs to be done. Make time for all that is important and you will see them through. If you procrastinate, not only will things remain but your will power will erode.

7. DO SOME GOOD FOR OTHERS

We are not just talking about a good deed like opening the door for someone, but selfless service in some way. This is an absolute must if you want to hasten worry's departure. You have to see for yourself that there are few to no worries at all when motive is removed from action. This in time will show you the way to dislodge motive from other areas like a living classroom. Motive which gave rise to the numbers game we talked about earlier has to be felled and selfless service is the best way. This service is best rendered to other than kith and kin or friends, as there a subtle interest can be present or it can seep in later. Open your mind wide and give of yourself in new areas—expand!

8. DO REGULAR JAPA

Japa is reciting the name of the Lord or a mantra. You can do this with or without a rosary, mentally (which is best), or in a low voice. *Japa* is a simple practice but it demands regularity and great love for practice. When you do *japa*, keep your attention on the mental sound of the *mantra*. Gradually, you will become aware of distraction. Be aware of distractions but do not be distracted—this is important. *Japa* has incalculable benefits, aside from increasing love for God, it will release you from worry as you will begin to recognize worry as thought that rises and falls just like waves on the ocean. You will be able to go on doing what needs to happen free of the clutches of worry of existing patterns of thought.

9. GET SOME EXERCISE EVERY DAY

About 15-20 minutes of asanas and pranayama will do you a world of good. You have to do these with all your being and full of awareness to the body, breath and mind. Ditch the music—it is distraction and is counter-productive. I would also recommend getting out in the fresh air for a brisk walk or jog in the mornings or later in the evenings for about 15-20 minutes. Keep your mind on the activity and feel yourself getting healthier with every step. Drive out all thoughts ruthlessly, as they are unnecessary and have nothing to do with what you are doing. Aside from exercise, this will be another avenue to rewire the mind by training it to be in the present.

10. TAKE FOOD AS MEDICINE

You are what you eat. Certain foods excite the guna of rajas or increase movement which is distraction in the mind. A simple diet of vegetarian food, fresh fruit, grains and milk will be most helpful. Eat without distraction and digest your food well. You will eat less and know when you have had enough. Eat at fixed times and avoid snacks, let the body digest its food well. Avoid both extremes; eating too much and the skinny diets—they both make you sickly. Take food as medicine.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

There are no quick fixes for worry, it has to be a total all-out approach to rewire the mind, renew the body and heal the heart. You need selfless service more than the cause. Do not discount the value of sadhana or spiritual practice. Be regular, the key is repetition but not being mechanically repetitive—you have to stay alert and increase inner sharpness so that each repeated practice is fresh. Life is repetition but we have become repetitive—you can change this. Remember, the one time you cannot afford to worry is when you do worry. You can do this if you only will.