MyQuest

By Daniel Labbe

Today's Meditation - Ever notice how many religions and self-help models focus on the idea that a good, healthy life - a perfect life - would be one free of stress and suffering? I even find myself often feeling like I'm not "living right" or like I'm doing something wrong when I feel stressed out or if I'm experiencing anything less than happiness. This is ridiculous, of course; but so many of us feel like we must be happy and joyful, that these are the signs of a healthy life and anything less means we aren't up to par. This is a recipe for true suffering.

Nature itself relies on stress for growth and evolution. Stress and difficulties are the motivating force behind growth. Imagine humankind without any stress or pain. We would be stagnant, without any reason to reach out to the farthest ~~e~~ends of our potential. I bet that if there was an experiment of two groups of people, 5000 in each group, ~~we did~~ If we took one group (all 18 years old) and we provided for ~~them~~ their every need, ~~[illegible]~~ sheltered them from death, loss, and disease (if that were possible) and housed them in a beautiful, utopian-like community for 25 years, then we ~~took~~ another group of 5,000 18 year-olds and just followed them in their daily lives in the regular world, if they were exposed to all the regular ups and downs, tragedies and adventures that are common to all of us, if we could do this, we would see some surprising results. My Guess is that the first group wouldn't be much

different 25 years later. Maybe a bit bored, No one is all that miserable, but no one is very happy, either. Rather boring. The second group, I believe, would be a whole other story. Sure some people would be miserable, would fail and suffer, yet ~~others~~ there would also be people that led inspiring, fantastic lives. There would be inventors and artists, and geniuses as well as criminals and ~~neurotics psychotics~~. failures. I don't know what the results would be, but it would be a cool experiment, huh? All would experience suffering in the second group, but what results!

Anyway, why view stress and pain as the enemy? In order for us to know joy, we must also know suffering. To be healthy we would have to have the possibility to be sick; otherwise, the concept of "health" wouldn't even exist. In order to exist there also must be the possibility of absence. If all the world was made up of just one color, say green, then the idea of "color" couldn't even be thought of. Suffering, pain, provides the backdrop in which joy can be seen, ~~[illegible]~~ can be contrasted against. This isn't to say we want to suffer, only we don't have to add the additional stress and pain of hating it, resisting it, and repulsing it. When stress arises, why add ~~a~~ an additional layer of stress by fighting against it? What if we accepted it as a legitimate reality, then chose a proactive response, use the stress/pain as an indicator that guides us in choosing a productive response. Of course, it would be great if our action resulted in the cessation of the stressor, but if it didn't, we could accept and respond to that as well.

I believe a great share of our pain and suffering is actually due to our own resistance. We add layers of pain, like blankets, on top of the original stressor by fighting against it, by rejecting its legitimacy to exist. This rejection ~~of~~ adds additional pain, often more painful

than the original Stressor! Stress and Pain are Valid and legitimate realities. In fact, they are vital to our existance and growth, not to mention that they provide the backdrop in which joy and health and be identified in.

What do you think fellow travellers?

Current Events - Last night (Thur. 5-13-11) I facilitated the first community advertised Mindful Living group. Twelve people showed up, and it went great! We started off with ten minutes of meditation and quiet reflection. Then I read a passage from the book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People about our Freedom to choose and how our responses to circumstances create our experience even more than the actual circumstances do. Then we had an open-discussion about how we could apply this to life in Prison. We served green tea and had an all around fantastic group. Everyone was very excited about it all. I had put together a welcoming pack that outlined what Mindful Living was about and the key principles. I also included a brief description of meditation and the basic Buddhist Principles. When I get some more Stamps I'll Post up a copy of the Welcoming Pack. It's typed so you don't have to struggle with my chicken scratch :) I'll also include some Artwork.

Now I need to get the Prospectus for LifeQuest typed up. I really look forward to your feed-back on this as LifeQuest is my dream for revolutionizing the Self-help field.

Tomorrow night, No tonight! I'm giving a speech at Toast Masters. It's on Emotional States of Value, or ESV's. I believe that most goals People have are actually ways to produce the ESV's they

4)

would like to experience. If people first figured out the ESV's they would like to experience they could then tailor their goals more specifically to create these ESV's — rather than just picking goals with a purely "results" oriented view. A person who wants a luxury sports car doesn't want it for its transportational value but for how driving such a car would make them feel. They are really after this feeling or ESV, not a Ferrai (spell?). If this person could identify the ESV he or she wants, that person could then think of a variety of ways to achieve it rather than be stuck on getting the sports car. Check-out your own biggest "wants" or goals and think how achieving those goals would make you feel, what ESV are you after (your true goal). Then see how many other ways you could manifest that ESV.

Not much else happening here. Prison life is rather predictable. Oh, we just held a debate involving students from Bridgewate State College. We are also getting two new programs. A garden program where inmates can grow vegetables and a dog training program. We will be helping to car for dogs that are being trained to help disabled vets. Cool, huh? Members in this program will actually be able to keep the dog in his cell, walk him around the prison, etc. I can't wait for the dogs to arrive. It's been 8 years since I've seen one. We do have a lot of wild-life here, though. Wild-turkeys, deer, ground hogs, Hawks, rabbits, and others. In the yard we have Camomile (spell?) wild onions, Strawberrys, Mushrooms (in the fall their are two edible varieties that grow here), and other varieties herbs.

Book Talk - I just read The Devil and Miss Prym, by Paulo Coelho (Same guy that wrote the Alchemist). The Alchemist was a great book, but this one... not so much. He tried too hard

to re-create the magic and the straining effort showed. The Alchemist was simple, yet profound where as this was more complicated and mundane.

Now I am reading Seeds of Contemplation, by Thomas Merton. Yes, it's written by a Catholic Monk, but I find wisdom in all traditions, especially when the author is a mystic. Ever notice how most Mystics, despite their officially claimed religion, kind of agree in their beliefs? They seem to understand Symbolism and Personal Communion whereas the clergy and fundementalists are exclusive and claim hold of the "only truth". It's all literal, but I see this as at least a beginning. As people progress toward the peak they tend to share similiar views, but at the base people are distant and exclusive. It's all about a natural progression. But that's a whole other Meditation! Remember Today's Meditation on Stress and 'till next time, Happy Questing!

Today's Quote. "If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your own estimate of it." Marcus Aurelius

Oh, I may have used that one before, so here's another good one: "We are always in the forge, or on the anvil; by trials God is shaping us for higher things." Henry Ward Beecher