

# My Quest

By Daniel Labbe

Today's Meditation - I was reading a book on meditation recently, and I came across an ~~interesting~~ interesting term: Unconditional Positive Regard. The concept is a familiar one in Eastern Traditions, but I've never heard it termed this way. Usually we hear about unconditional love or compassion, both of which rank high on my list of values.

So what's the deal with Unconditional Positive Regard? Many of us seek to increase the quality of our lives whether it is through inner contentment or positive interpersonal relationships, yet this effort is often slowed down by our own judgements and critical attitudes toward others. Consider how much time we spend in bitter judgement of others, in ruminating about <sup>the</sup> grudges and resentments we hold against people, and in negative gossip. Whenever we are involved in one of these activities we lose our peace of mind, our bodies become tense, and a dark cloud envelops us with malevolent vibes. In other words, it doesn't feel good! Not only that, our relationships suffer and we aren't as effective in our relationship goals as we'd like to be. This drains us and diminishes our quality of life, not to mention that we often detract from the quality of other people's lives when we engage in these attitudes and activities.

Unconditional Positive Regard means that we choose not to engage those judgmental thoughts and impulses when they arise. Instead we choose to regard the other person in a positive light... unconditionally. This does not mean that we ~~do~~ have to like the other person. Neither does it mean that we have to be pleasant or accomodating. What it does mean is that regardless of how we feel about this person we choose to recognize that he (or she) is a human being, just like us,

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and this being struggles with karmic forces just as we do. He suffers, he wants to enjoy life, and he only has the skills that are available to him at that moment. It isn't our job to figure out all the forces, experiences, and reasons why and how he acts the way he does, and because this isn't our job we recognize that it is far more beneficial to us and the other person if we just assume he ~~has~~ a pure, innocent, beautiful core - just like we do - and that he is struggling with some powerful forces - just like we are. If we were to know all the factors, we might realize that we ourselves may not be doing as ~~well~~ well as this person is if we had to endure everyone ~~of~~ of those factors. It's all too complicated to "figure out", so why not assume the best?

With unconditional positive regard we still hold people accountable for their actions, the difference is that we do so with a heart of compassion rather than a heart of bitter judgement and condemnation. We hold people responsible to their actions because we love them rather than because we want our "pound of flesh". Actions carried out with this attitude look a lot different than actions carried out with bitterness and resentment.

Why not just assume that everyone has a "good", loving, and beautiful core? That any negativity we view in people is ~~an~~ a sign of their struggle, the struggle between their divine core and their worldly ego's which ~~an~~ may have been conditioned with untold suffering, trauma, and god knows what else. This lets us off the hook, for now we no longer need to waste time figuring this person out or judging him, instead we drop the whole game and choose love (or positive regard) instead. Again, we don't need to "like" someone to ~~#~~ love them. Love is a choice, liking and attraction are feelings. When we live with unconditional positive regard we feel

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lighter, more peaceful, and more effective. People no longer have control over our feelings. They can't ~~make~~ us hate them or resent them. Unconditional Positive Regard is an attitude of personal responsibility and it is empowering as well as liberating! What do you think?

Current Events - Well, the May, 19<sup>th</sup> gathering of the Mindful Living group was another great success! Twelve people showed up (that's a lot for an inmate run program at Old Colony prison!). This week I played a cassette tape of Zen monks chanting and hitting a gong while we opened with the ten minute meditation period. We then talked about Mindfulness and read a passage from the book The Power of Now, by Eckhart Tolle. We had a group discussion on ~~what~~ how the passage relates to our lives and we also had some green tea. Guys said they enjoyed it a lot and found it helpful. This is definitely how I want to live my life, helping people by offering groups, activities, and social settings to improve their lives. It helps me, too. Now that I started this group, guys kind of look up to me. I want to show them that the skills we discuss really work.

Not long ago, I was far from being a model inmate. I got into fights and I was always getting into it with the C.O.'s all the time. My attitude was that I do my best to treat you well, so you better do the same for me... or else! But through some honest self-exploration and through learning how to implement new, effective skills I have been able to lead a much more rewarding, responsible life, one that reflects the best parts of who I am much more clearly.

I'm so excited about this change in myself that I want to

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Share it with everyone. I want everyone to feel as free and empowered as I do. The way I see it, most guys in prison truly do want to lead better lives, only ⚡ many of them don't know how to cope with life any other way than the way they've been trained to. To be honest, the conventional skills that people try to push on inmates are often ~~for~~ ineffective, and so when they use these weak skills they get discouraged because the results they get aren't worth the effort. In fact, their dysfunctional coping skills often work better! At least they get results with these ~~soft~~ street skills.

But I believe there is a third option. The leading edge of psychology teaches CBT and DBT skills and these I have found very effective. The problem is, when prison staff teaches it to inmates they don't make the information practical. Inmates are not shown how this specific skill, say dialectical thinking, will make a positive impact in their daily lives. Like, what situations would this skill be useful and how will it benefit them? The same goes for a lot of spiritual principles. Too often spirituality remains aloof and ⚡ the people who live in poor neighborhoods, or prisons, don't have the luxury of ~~a~~ a safe environment and free time (too busy with the work of survival) to contemplate and untangle the aloof mysteries. I want to bring psychological and spiritual skills to these kind of people in a way that makes Practical sense ~~to~~ <sup>help</sup>. That's my hope for LifeQuest, the self-organization I am creating. I hope to have the typed prospectus ready for the blog soon.

If my dream sounds important to you, let me know. I could use all the help and support I can get!

A Thank You - I would like to thank a very kind

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Pen-pal of mine who donated some books to the Mindful Living group here at Old Colony. Your kindness and generosity are a blessing.  
Thank you :).

That's all for this week. Happy Questing fellow travelers!

Today's Quote "If You Want others to be happy, Practice Compassion. If You Want to be happy, Practice Compassion."  
The Dalai Lama