

The Sun is Always Shining!

The UK in February can seem pretty grey, but of course, the bright blue sky is still there. We just cannot see it whilst it is obscured by layer after layer of dark winter clouds.

Have you ever wondered whether human happiness is rather like a clear blue sky? It is always there waiting for us to connect to it - like an infinitely patient, but virtually invisible, guest waiting and waiting on our doorstep.

This I now know: deep within each and every one of us, is an infinite well of pure love and joy. However, one of our core problems as a species is that the vast majority of human beings have no idea about this inner well of love and joy because of all the dark, negative thoughts that constantly cloud their pre-programmed minds. Let me elaborate a little.

As we were growing up, we were all programmed by our parents, our teachers and our society to hold a set of beliefs about ourselves and the world. Some of these programmed beliefs may have been pretty positive, especially if we had really kind, loving parents and enlightened teachers and guides. However, most people I know did not have quite such wonderful childhoods. Even those of us who had basically kind, caring parents nevertheless absorbed a few happiness destroying beliefs such as: 'I am unlovable'. 'I am unattractive'. 'I am a low achiever'. So we all grew up with a conscious or subconscious belief that we were not really good enough to have a truly wonderful, happy life.

Then we subconsciously tended to sabotage our own happiness by waiting for the other shoe to drop. When we were young, someone drop dead gorgeous asked us out and we found ourselves almost paralysed by fear. We were given a promotion at work and we were convinced that we did not really deserve it and so once again self-doubt and anxiety reared their ugly heads.

To compound our misery, as well as being programmed to believe that we do not really deserve infinite blessings, we are also programmed to believe that unless we have certain specific people or things in our lives we cannot be truly happy. I know that I have told some of you this true story before but it fits in here rather nicely. When I was in my 20s and 30s I was so miserable much of the time because I had convinced myself that I could not possibly be happy without

a particular man coming back into my life. This belief was quite crazy, but it certainly had a powerful effect on me until I finally began to question it.

I have just finished re-reading a short, but exceptionally powerful book by Anthony De Mello entitled *The Way to Love* and I have been contemplating De Mello's claim that the main reason we are all so dissatisfied with our life much of the time is because we have been programmed to become attached to certain people, objects, beliefs, desires and dislikes. We then believe that we cannot be happy unless or until we have what we desire or don't have what we dislike.

However, according to De Mello, this is not true at all. We simply have to be brave and honest enough to look deep within our own crazy, programmed, robotic minds until we finally see how our attachments cause us so much unnecessary pain and suffering. Once we really see this, we will quite naturally aim to let go of each and every one of them.

Letting go of all our fixed attachments that obscure our natural inner joy does not have to be an arduous process. The seeing is basically the doing. Just by opening up to the possibility that our attachments are causing us pain, we begin to loosen our fearfully tight grip on beliefs such as: 'I cannot be happy without him/her/it'.

The other day for example, I noticed a little blood as I was brushing my teeth and my immediate reaction was: 'Oh no! I have gum disease again and soon I will lose one of my front teeth and look like an ugly old crone!!' But because I had just finished reading Anthony De Mello, I began to look a little deeper at my anxiety. I then laughed when I realised that I truly believed that I could not be happy without my front teeth being firmly in place. I then told myself that in the olden days, loads of people must have accepted a lack of teeth without getting into a terrible panic about it.

This month, maybe you would like to join me in committing to noticing when any kind of belief or attachment causes you to dwell in fear or anger rather than love. Once you spot an attachment of any kind that is causing you some sort of anxiety or irritation with life, you can then simply say to yourself, 'This attachment is hiding my deep inner joy from me.' Now even after saying this, you may well still choose to hang onto some attachments which seem particularly significant to you. But just noticing that strong attachment and the

trouble it causes you is a big step towards living a happy, peaceful life in the midst of worldly chaos.

I certainly cannot promise you that this month I will completely let go of my attachment to having a full set of front teeth! But I do promise to keep noticing how attachments such as this one create fear and anxiety in my mind. I will also keep contemplating how these endless anxious thoughts prevent me from experiencing the perfect happiness that God wills for me and for all of us, without exception. (*A Course in Miracles*: lesson 101)

I know the idea that our life is supposed to be incredibly beautiful, joyful and fulfilling is a big shock for many of us. But simply opening up to this miraculous possibility can be a wonderful first step in returning home to love, and what better month of the year to begin the journey home to love than the month during which we celebrate St. Valentine's Day?

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