

# **THERAPY MANUAL**

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**Some suggestions for finding peace of mind and  
happiness**

**Section one:**  
**Thoughts and feelings**

We do not have to be at the mercy of painful emotions. There is a way to take control over our feelings, rather than our feelings being in control of us. This way begins with understanding that the events in our lives – events over which we have no control like what other people say and do – are **NOT** the cause of our emotions. In fact, what causes our feelings to be of one sort or another is what we think and believe about those events. In other words, our thoughts interpret the meaning of events, and occur between the events and our emotions.

Event(s) → Thoughts, beliefs, interpretations → Feelings, emotions

In fact, this understanding has been recognized for around two or three millennia, as some of the following quotations show.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

---Solomon, Proverbs 23:7a, c. 1000 BC

It is the province of a magnanimous person to bear with mildness the errors of others. A good person pays no attention to the reproofs of the depraved.

--- Democrates, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC

Vex not thy spirit at the course of things. They heed not thy vexation.

--- Euripides, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Things are determined by the view taken of them.

--- Monimus, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC

People are not moved by things, but by the views which they take of them.

--- Epictetus, c. AD 100

Whenever you face trials of any kind, **consider** it nothing but joy, because you **know** that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

--- James 1:2-4, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

--- Romans 12:2a, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

Put away from yourself the belief that you have been wronged, and with it will go the feeling. Reject your **sense** of injury, and the injury itself disappears.

You are not compelled to form any opinion about this matter before you, nor to disturb your peace of mind at all. Things in themselves have no power to extract a verdict from you.

If I do not view the thing as an evil, I take no hurt. Nothing compels me to view it so.

If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your own estimate of it, and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.

Observe how a person's disquiet is all of his or her own making, and how troubles never come from another's hand, but like all else are creatures of one's own opinion.

Everything is but what your opinion makes it. That opinion lies within yourself. Renounce it when you will, and at once all is calm.

--- Caesar Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD

The nature of things is judged by the inner attitude of the soul; that is, one infers and makes judgments from where he is. He in whom prayer and love are real does not see dichotomy in things; he does not separate the saint from the sinner and does not judge, but loves all equally, as God does, who makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike.

--- Abba Nicetas Stethatos, 11<sup>th</sup> century

There's nothing either good or bad  
But thinking makes it so.

--- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, ii, 259; 1599 – 1601

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an hermitage;  
If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul I'm free,  
Angels above that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty

--- Richard Lovelace, *To Althea, from Prison*, 1642

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

--- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1667

I saw that all the things I feared, and which feared me, had nothing good or bad in them save insofar as the mind was affected by them.

--- Baruch Spinoza, 17<sup>th</sup> century

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts from an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it lists; a tamed mind brings happiness.

Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very subtle, and the rush wherever they list; well-guarded thoughts bring happiness.

--- Buddha, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century

We are self-determined by the meaning we give to our experiences . . . . Everything depends on opinion.

--- Alfred Adler, MD

Psychological problems can be mastered by sharpening discriminations, correcting misconceptions, and learning more adaptive attitudes. The therapist helps the patient to identify his [biased] thinking and to learn more realistic ways to formulate his experiences. When a person can fill in the gap between an event and an emotion, the puzzling reaction becomes understandable. With training, people can catch the rapid thoughts or images that occur between an event and the emotional response. When a person changes his appraisal of a situation, his emotional reaction changes. Meaning provides the richness of life; it transforms a simple event into an experience. The meaning of an event determines the emotional response. The meaning is encased in a cognition – a thought or an image.

--- Aaron Beck, MD, *Cognitive Therapy of the Emotional Disorders*

When a highly charged emotion follows a significant event, the event may seem to, but does not, cause the emotion. Instead, emotions are created by the individual's beliefs. When an undesirable emotion occurs, this can usually be traced to irrational, illogical beliefs. When these beliefs are disputed, by challenging them logically, the unpleasant emotions disappear. Virtually all serious emotional problems stem from magical, unprovable thinking. If disturbing ideas are vigorously disputed with logic, they tend to evaporate. Self-defeating behavior is also related to beliefs, not past or present events. Emotional disturbances persist only because of continued magical, illogical beliefs. Because magical thinking is so habitual, only hard work, practice, and repeated rethinking of irrational beliefs can correct them.

--- paraphrased from Albert Ellis, Ph.D.

# Irrational Ideas

Adapted from Albert Ellis, here are ten inaccurate, mistaken, false ideas.

1. I must have love or approval from all the people I find significant.
2. I must prove completely competent, adequate, achieving, and successful.
3. When people act unfairly, I MUST get angry. I cannot help it.
4. I MUST view things as awful, terrible, horrible, and catastrophic when I get merely frustrated, treated unfairly, or rejected.
5. Depression and anxiety come from external pressures, and I have little ability to control my feelings.
6. If something seems dangerous or frightening, I must preoccupy myself with it and make myself anxious about it.
7. It is easier to *avoid* facing difficulties and responsibilities than to practice discipline.
8. My past remains all-important, and because something once strongly influenced me, it MUST keep determining my feelings and behavior today, leaving me no choice and no hope.
9. Things should turn out better than they do, and I must view it as awful and horrible if I do not find good solutions to life's grim realities.
10. I can achieve maximum human happiness by inaction or by just "enjoying myself."

# Irrational Rules

1. If I am not on top, I am a loser.
2. It is pure paradise to be popular, beautiful, famous, and wealthy; it is awful, terrible, gruesome, and unbearable to be average, mediocre, poor, or plain.
3. If I make a mistake, it means I am inferior, inept, stupid, incompetent, inadequate, unqualified, unfit, clumsy, lazy, careless, negligent, or have a flawed moral character.
4. My value as a human being is defined by (1) what others think of me, (2) how I look, (3) my salary & net worth, (4) lifestyle, neatness of house, car I drive, etc., & (5) intelligence, talent, accomplishments, education, skill at my job, reputation, & VIP's I know.
5. I cannot live without love, or, without this one person's love.
6. If someone disagrees with me or tells me "No," it means s/he does not like me.
7. If I miss any opportunity to advance myself, I will surely regret it later.

# Destructive Demands

1. The world should be fair, especially to me.
2. I MUST get quite upset over other people's problems to show I care about them.
3. I MUST be the utmost in generosity, considerateness, courage, and unselfishness.
4. I should always be at peak efficiency.
5. I should be the perfect friend, spouse, romantic partner, friend, employee, boss, teacher, or student.
6. I should be able to find a solution to my problems as well as everybody else's.
7. I should never feel hurt. I must always be happy and serene.
8. I should always know, understand, and foresee everything.
9. I should always be spontaneous, or, I should always control my feelings.
10. I should always stand up for myself, or, I should never allow anyone else to be hurt.
11. I should always make other people happy.
12. I should never get tired or sick.
13. If I work hard, things should turn out the way I want.
14. People should always be friendly, kind, understanding, fair, and generous to me if I am to them.
15. Life should be fair.

# Healthy Beliefs

1. I can choose to be ordinary at times. Ordinary things can be very pleasurable.
2. One can be human, like everyone else, and still be unique.
3. There can be great rewards in being a team player.
4. I can enjoy being like others, rather than always having to be better.
5. I can choose to be a member of a group and not always the exception.
6. I can go for long-term respect from others instead of short-term admiration.
7. Other people have needs and opinions that matter too.
8. Colleagues can be resources, not just competitors.
9. Feedback can be valid and helpful. It's only devastating if I take it that way.
10. No one owes me anything in life.
11. Thinking about real situations can be healthier than being preoccupied with exaggerated dreams.
12. I don't really need constant attention and admiration from everyone to exist and be happy.
13. Superiority and inferiority among people are value judgments and thus always subject to change.
14. Everyone has flaws.
15. Everyone is special in some way.
16. I can choose to be accountable for my own moods. To let the evaluations of others control my moods makes me dependent on them and out of control of myself.

# Assertive Rights

1. Life
2. Liberty
3. Property
4. Pursuit of Happiness
5. I have the right to choose my own thoughts, words, deeds, and emotions, and to take responsibility for their consequences.
6. I have the right to be the judge of my own thoughts, words, deeds, and emotions.
7. I have the right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying my chosen behavior.
8. I have the right to be independent of the approval of others.
9. I have the right to judge whether I am responsible for finding solutions to other people's problems.
10. I have the right to change my mind.
11. I have the right to make mistakes.
12. I have the right to say, "I don't know," as well as, "I don't understand."
13. I have the right to be inconsistent and even illogical in making decisions.
14. I have the right to say "No" without feeling guilty.
15. I have the right to decide whether to exercise these rights or not, weighing the costs and benefits of each option for myself.
16. It is okay to want something from someone else and ask for it.
17. I can stand it if I do not get what I want.
18. The fact that someone says no to my request does not mean I should not have asked in the first place.
19. Standing up for myself for my small things can be just as important as others' big things.

20. If I respect the rights of others, when I then insist on my rights, *I am being a good and moral person.*
21. Sometimes, I have a right to assert myself, even though it may inconvenience others.
22. The fact that another person might not be assertive does not mean I should not be.
23. I can understand and validate another person, and still ask for what I want.
24. There is no law that says other people's opinions are more valid than mine.
25. There is no law that says my opinions are more valid than other people's.
26. I can want to please the people I care about, but I don't have to please them all the time.
27. If I decline to do a favor for someone, it does not mean I do not like him or her, and he or she will probably understand that, too.
28. I am under no obligation to say yes to people just because they ask a favor of me.
29. The fact that I say no to someone does not make me a selfish person.
30. If I say no to someone who then gets angry, it does not mean I should have said yes.
31. I have the right to feel good about myself, even though someone is annoyed with me.

## Forgiveness (adapted from Lewis Smedes)

1. Perhaps the most powerful psychological healing force is the power to accept the reality of a past that cannot be changed.
2. To forgive a person means first we convict that person of being guilty of something, specifically of an unjust injury to ourselves. One does not forgive the innocent.
3. Forgiveness does not mean we condone the injury, that is, consider it trivial. We do not excuse the persons we forgive; we **blame** the persons we forgive.
4. The second step in forgiving is a choice to issue a pardon, which means we release the person from the punishment he or she validly deserves.
5. What happens next is the emotional healing: we release the resentment we feel for the wrong that has been committed. The first two steps are active choices we make; this step occurs on its own.
6. Forgiving occurs in the mind and heart; what happens to the people we forgive is out of our control.
7. We do not forgive for the benefit of the wrongdoer (who may not care whether we do or not), but **for our own benefit**, for our own healing. It is not a way of avoiding pain, but of healing pain.
8. Forgiving does **not** require us to reconcile with the wrongdoer.
9. “Forgive and forget” is pious nonsense. The words get linked only because of the accident of sharing the first four letters. Since it is only real injuries that we forgive, it would be unwise to forget them.
10. Waiting for someone to repent before we forgive is to surrender our future to the wrongdoer.
11. The wrongdoer committed the injury or injuries in the past. Our clinging to resentment perpetuates the injury, making us the wrongdoer in the present.
12. We do not forgive because we are supposed to; we forgive when we are ready to be healed.

**Section two:**  
**Behavior**

**Assertive behavior enables a person to act in one's own best interest, to stand up for oneself without undue anxiety, to express honest wishes, opinions, and feelings comfortably, and to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others.**

# A Guide to Assertive Behavior

**Passive** behavior is keeping your feelings to yourself and ignoring your rights to express yourself. You allow others to choose for you, which leaves you feeling angry, anxious, disappointed with yourself, and resentful. You do not achieve your goals or feel good about yourself. Therefore, anger builds up.

**Passive behavior denies one's own rights.**

**Aggressive** behavior is dominating other people by various unjust means, such as expressing your feelings while not allowing others to do so, saying insulting or threatening things, or by outright bullying and intimidating. By being aggressive, you force your choices on others. You may achieve your goal in the short run but face unwanted pushback (or payback!) in the long run. You may gain the fear but lose the respect of others, and you may accumulate feelings of guilt.

**Aggressive behavior denies others' rights.**

**Passive-aggressive** behavior is a cyclic pattern of the two. You are passive about not expressing your feelings when something happens, resentment builds, and results in direct or indirect aggressive behavior. Indirect aggression includes such things as dragging your feet or never being satisfied. The other person may have a vague sense of your feelings but cannot deal with you honestly because your communication has not been clear and honest. For the same reason, you are ineffective in changing the situation you resent, and the cycle continues. When the cycle includes direct aggression, as above, guilt follows with attempts to atone for the aggression by again becoming passive, and round and round it goes.

**Passive-aggressive behavior denies everyone's rights, and no one is happy.**

**Assertive** behavior is expressing honest facts, wishes, opinions, and feelings comfortably. It involves taking full responsibility for yourself while refusing to blame others for your feelings or predicament. This allows you to make your own choices, show empathy, and engage in greater levels of psychological intimacy with others. By being assertive, you gain more respect for yourself, as others respect you for standing up for your own rational self-interest. Using this behavior, you are more likely to achieve your goals, and you will still feel good about yourself even if you have not met your goals.

**Assertive behavior is a steadfast commitment to the rights of yourself and all others involved simultaneously. It is "win/win."**

## **Assertiveness: Components**

**Eye contact.** Looking directly at others is important so they will know you mean what you say. Too little is passive; staring is aggressive.

**Posture and gestures.** Face the other directly, respecting an appropriate personal space. Too distant is passive; too close is aggressive. Animate your message with non-threatening gestures. If you slump, you may get ignored; if you jab with a pointed finger, you may provoke a fight.

**Facial expression.** The look on your face should express how you feel and should be consistent with your words.

**Voice.** Tone, inflection, and volume are important. The person to whom you speak will ignore a weak, mousy voice, while a loud, aggressive voice scares or provokes others.

**Content.** State clearly how you feel and what you want from others. More about this on the next page.

**Timing.** Thinking about what you are going to say before you say it is best, so do this at the earliest possible time. Practice some empathy before you speak, such as not confronting your boss in front of a group of people, or your partner when he or she is already in a rage about something else.

# Assertiveness: “I” Statements

We use “I” Statements to express our feelings, thoughts, and preferences in a clear, direct, and honest manner. “I” Statements keep arguments to a minimum. On the other hand, “You” Statements very often put people on the defensive immediately.

**Expressing feelings** (Remember, feelings are almost always *one word*, such as happy, sad, anxious, rather than a *clause*, such as “I feel that \_\_\_\_\_,” which is actually an *opinion* and diminishes your power.)

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ happens.  
(feeling) (situation or behavior)

Examples:

I feel angry when all the chores are left for me to do.  
(situation)

I feel happy when you give me flowers.  
(behavior)

## Expressing thoughts

I think \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(Thoughts, beliefs, or opinions)

Examples:

I think our child would benefit from more discipline.  
(thought)

I think people are becoming more self-centered.  
(opinion)

## Expressing preferences (It’s okay to add “please” at the end.)

I prefer \_\_\_\_\_ .  
I want \_\_\_\_\_ .  
I would like \_\_\_\_\_ .  
I desire \_\_\_\_\_ .

Examples:

I would like some help washing the car.

I prefer that you lower your voice when you speak to me.

# Assertiveness: Obstacles

The next step in becoming an assertive person is learning how to avoid manipulation. You will encounter blocking *gambits* from those that seek to ignore your assertive rights. Preparing yourself against several typical blocking gambits that others use to derail your assertive requests is helpful. Some of the most troublesome include:

**Laughing it off**

**Blaming you for the problem**

**Personal counterattack**

**Delaying** -- “Not now, I’m too tired,” or “Another time (maybe).”

**Why?** - Invalidating your effort by demanding, to *their* satisfaction, a justification for your every statement

**Self-pity** – Responding as if you had injured them or been aggressive and unfair, when in fact you have not.

**Quibbling**

**Threats, perhaps of ending the relationship**

**Blatant denial**

**Countercomplaining** – Responding to your assertion by ignoring *your* concern, and derailing discussion of your concern by bringing up an unrelated criticism of you.

# Assertiveness: Strategic Considerations

Adapted from Marsha Linehan, *DBT Workbook*

Assertive decisions fall upon a continuum from low intensity to high intensity. When we decide to move in a low intensity direction, we move toward radical acceptance of a person or situation we cannot change. When we move in the direction of high intensity, we increase our efforts and commitment to change the unacceptable situation.

## Priorities

Are your objectives extremely important? Increase intensity.

Is the relationship on shaky ground? Reduce intensity.

Is your integrity, dignity, or self-respect on the line? Increase intensity.

## Capabilities

Can the person comply with my request? Increase the intensity of asking.

Do I even have what the other requests? If no, increase intensity of refusal.

## Timeliness

Is this a good time to ask?

Is the person in the right mood for listening, paying attention, and engaging?

Is this in fact a bad time for me to say, “no” to him or her?

Should I simply postpone an answer?

## Homework

Do I have all the facts necessary to support my request?

Am I clear within myself about what I want?

Is the other’s request clear?

Do I know enough about what I’m about to agree to?

## Authority

Am I responsible for directing the person, for telling them what to do?

Does the person have authority over me?

Is what the person is asking within his or her authority?

## Ethics, morals, and law

Is the person required by law or moral code to give me what I want?

Am I required to give the other what s/he asks?

Would saying “no” violate the other’s rights?

Am I requesting something that would violate the other’s rights?

**Relationship**

Is what I am asking appropriate to this relationship?

Is what the other is asking for appropriate to this relationship?

**Reciprocity**

What have I done for the person? Am I giving at least as much as I am asking for?

Am I willing to give back an equivalent to what I am asking?

Do I owe this person a favor?

Does s/he do a lot for me?

**Short term vs Long term**

Will not asking get me peace now but submission later?

Will asking get me compliance now but resentment later?

Will giving in get me peace now but submission later?

Will I eventually regret or resent my answer?

What will my request, or my answer, cost in the long run?

**Respect**

Do I usually do things for myself?

Do I have the integrity to avoid acting helpless when I'm really not?

Which answer will increase my dignity, and which will decrease it?

Which answer will make me feel good or bad about myself?

# Assertiveness: Detachment

Are you in a relationship where you are constantly the Rescuer? Eventually, Rescuers come to feel victimized by the Victim they have been rescuing! It may not be immediately obvious, but detachment as defined below is actually a very healthy alternative. When we let go of our obsession with another person's behavior, we begin to lead happier and more manageable lives, lives with dignity, lives which enjoy the respect of ourselves and others, lives guided by reason rather than a self-deception of omnipotence. To accomplish the release of this obsession, we vow:

1. Not to suffer because of the self-defeating actions or reactions of another
2. Not to allow ourselves to be used or abused in the supposed interest of another
3. Not to do for others what they can do for themselves
4. Not to create a crisis
5. Not to *prevent* a crisis or bail out a Victim of a self-defeating habit, such as addiction, nor to rescue such a person, but to allow such a person to face the natural consequences of his or her own choices
6. Not to manipulate situations so that a Victim will eat, go to bed, get up, bathe, go to work, pay bills; not to infantilize another
7. Not to cover up for another's mistakes or misdeeds

Detachment is not unkind, and it is not abandonment, no matter how it may appear at the precise moment it unfolds. Its kindness becomes visible later, after the Victim can no longer be a Victim since there is no Rescuer; after the substance abuser no longer has an Enabler; after the immature Adult Child is no longer pampered and spoiled; and after all self-defeating habits have disappeared since there is no more enmeshment, and a mature, healthy pair of human beings, sacred, filled with dignity and worthy of respect, remains.

When we detach, we remain available, but as a resource for information and counsel, not as a Savior who brings deliverance and protection from the perfectly natural aftermath of immature, unhealthy, or unwise choices. Detachment does not imply moral evaluation of judgment of the person from whom we detach. Rather, it utilizes Prudence as a means for us to recover from the adverse effects upon our own lives of pretending that we are responsible for anything and everything that happens to another. We are each finite human beings, mere puny mortals, not God. We are neither all-knowing nor all-powerful. Detachment is not unloving, as love is a commitment to the *long-term* well-being of the beloved, not to the immediate yet costly relief of present discomfort.

## **Section Three: Happiness**

In this essay, I wish to say some things about happiness, and how to achieve it, that I have found to be important. What follows is the essence of what some of the great philosophers have said about ultimate values, human rights, virtue, and free will, all of which have to do with experiencing happiness. I do not intend this essay to be an exhaustive survey of the subject, but instead, my own selections from the great writers of western civilization. As will be seen, I rely heavily on Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

I will begin this essay by asserting that happiness is Man's ultimate goal, his purpose for every action. This foundation begins with a discussion of values, specifically, those that we refer to as Transcendental Values, meaning those that are universal, eternal, or ideal. The discussion of the Highest Good leads naturally into an exploration of human rights. The best way to secure values and rights is by conforming one's life to the classical virtues, a discussion of which naturally follows. Once informed about the role of virtue in the good life, each of us then faces the question of how we will use our free will to pursue happiness.

## Values

**The Transcendental Values are Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.** The triad of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness emerged over the centuries of western thought, though they are not found in exactly that form in the earliest reference, which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates in the *Philebus* (65a): “Well, then, if we cannot capture the good in *one* form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for goodness is what makes the mixture good in itself.” I propose that an individual's value does not come from wealth, physical appearance, or achievement, but from the extent to which these Universal Values are expressed in his or her soul. This most commonly translates as: **Honesty, Integrity, and Compassion.**

**Truth.** Truth is correspondence between words (thought, spoken, or written) and reality. To speak the truth, our words must correspond to our thoughts, in particular those thoughts about which we are convinced and certain. Gandhi taught that God is Truth, and Truth is God. Scott Peck, M.D., agrees with Gandhi and extends his idea to say that lying is evil, and evil is lying. Peck's words echo those of Plato, who opined, “False words are not only evil in themselves; they infect the soul with evil.” Aristotle observes that the wandering, undisciplined imagination can mislead the mind into error and falsehood. Truth is the very foundation of virtue, and thus, happiness.

**Beauty.** Beauty requires (1) integrity or unity, (2) proportion or harmony, and (3) clarity. While the subject matter of truth is thought and logic, and that of

goodness is action and morality, beauty deals with pleasure, enjoyment, and aesthetics. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' -- that is all Ye know on earth, and all Ye need to know." (Keats) Beauty is a quality of things that are good as objects of contemplation and love. Contemplation is union with its object through desire and love. We direct our desire toward the acquisition and possession of the Good; love, with admiration and undiluted generosity, wishes only the well-being of the beloved. We find moral or spiritual beauty in noble individuals of virtuous character (heroes and heroines).

**Goodness.** Goodness is the measure or degree of perfection of an object, action, idea, or sentiment. "We always act with a view to some good. The good is the object that all pursue, and for the sake of which they always act" (Plato, Republic, I, iv). Absolute goodness is goodness entirely apart from humanity, in which we judge things by their nature alone. Absolute goodness is therefore objective (independent of human consent) rather than subjective (solely the expression of human opinion or judgment). Moral goodness is the relation in which a thing stands to human need, desire, or reason, which it may be good for someone to pursue, such as virtue, knowledge, or compassion. The Summum Bonum or Highest Good is the sum of all good things which, when possessed, leaves nothing to be desired. Classical philosophers, including Augustine and Aquinas, declare that the Highest Good is happiness. Happiness is the supreme and ultimate object of human endeavor. According to Plato, the highest happiness is not pleasure, nor wealth, nor knowledge, nor power, but consists of the intimate knowledge of, and enthusiastic love for, God. He taught that happiness depends upon the possession of this moral beauty and goodness, which importantly encompasses compassion as well.

## Rights

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Jefferson).

**Life.** Human Life is sacred. Humans are unique among the living in their possession and exercise of reason and free will. Immanuel Kant bases his Practical Imperative upon just this conviction: "Wherever we encounter humanity, whether in ourselves or in others, we must treat that very humanity itself as sacred: as an end in itself, and never as means to an end; as a person, and never as an object to be used for the purposes of oneself." Because every human life is sacred, no one can morally use another person for his or her own purposes, nor allow another to exploit oneself. Any act that violates the rights or sacredness of oneself or another is immoral. The use or threat of physical force is legitimate only in defense of one's life, liberty, or property from the violence of another. The initiation of physical force is immoral in *every* case (The NAP, or Non-Aggression Principle).

**Liberty.** According to Thomas Hobbes, the natural right of every person is "the liberty each man has to use his own power . . . for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, of his own life . . . and consequently of doing anything which in his own judgment and reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto." John Locke distinguishes natural and civil liberty: *Natural* liberty consists in being "free from any superior power on earth" or not being "under the will or legislative authority of man." On the other hand, *civil* liberty consists in being "under no legislative power but that established by consent." Civil liberty for Locke is a freedom for the individual to follow his or her own will in anything not prohibited by the law of the State. Kant more simply states that liberty is "independence from the compulsory will of another." Augustine and Aquinas agree that the virtuous individual enjoys moral and spiritual liberty because for him, reason has triumphed over the passions. According to Baruch Spinoza, when a person is governed by passions or feelings, that one is in "bondage, for a man under their control is not his own master, but is mastered by fortune, in whose power he is, so that he is often forced to follow the worse, though he sees the better before him." On the other hand, the one governed by Reason possesses liberty, because that one "does the will of no one but himself and does those things only which he knows are of greatest importance in life, and which he therefore desires above all things." J. S. Mill proclaims, "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it, for in proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others."

**Happiness.** "Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence," says Aristotle. "Man wishes to be happy, and only wishes to be happy, and cannot wish not to be so"(Paschal). Happiness is "an agreeable feeling or condition of the soul arising from good fortune or propitious happening of any kind; contentment; joyful satisfaction" according to Mr. Webster. Aristotle makes **eudaimonia** (happiness, flourishing, or literally, "good spiritedness") the highest good and ultimate end of human endeavor. He is famously quoted as having said, "Happiness is the highest good, being **a realization and perfect practice of virtue.**" "Happiness is a long-lasting, enduring enjoyment of life; it is being in love with living. It is your reward for achieving a good character and personal, rational, values in life . . . . Once you learn to have confidence in your own mind, and once you discover the virtues that make it possible for you to achieve your values that make your life worth living, then you will experience the result – an earned pride and a genuine self-esteem. And of course, happiness." (Ellen Kenner, Ph.D., Web Page) For the Stoics, as represented by Seneca, **virtue is entirely sufficient for**

**happiness**; not that it renders one insensible to pain, but because of it one rises superior to pain. If you want to experience happiness, commit to a lifetime of virtue.

## **Virtues**

The simplest definition of virtue is Aquinas' "good habit." More technically, an action conforming to morality is a virtuous action. Virtue is the conformity of the will to morality as discerned by practical reason or conscience. For the classical philosophers, virtue relates to happiness as the means to that very end. They enable a person to lead a good life and achieve happiness. The ancient conception of virtue extends to mind as well as to character, to thinking, knowledge, and reasoning as well as desire, emotion, and action. In the Republic, Plato states, "Virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, while vice is its disease, weakness, and deformity." Also, according to Aquinas, happiness "is the true reward for which the virtuous work, for if they worked for honor, it would no longer be virtue, but ambition." Spinoza proposes that, "To act in conformity with virtue is to act according to the guidance of reason, and every effort that we make through reason is an effort to understand, and therefore the highest good of those who follow after virtue is to know God . . . The good that everyone who follows after virtue seeks for himself, he will desire for others, and his desire on their behalf will be greater in proportion as he has greater knowledge of God." Elsewhere, Spinoza writes, "Happiness does not follow virtue, rather it **is** virtue." J. S. Mill adds, "The multiplication of happiness is, according to the utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue." "Because the moral virtues . . . direct our desires, determine our choices, and govern our actions in accordance with reason's discrimination between real and apparent goods, the exercise of these habits results in happiness or living well" (M. Adler).

The repeated exercise of virtue becomes not only habitual, but also enters one's character, enhancing and improving it. Likewise, the repeated indulgence in vice (the opposite of virtue) becomes habitual, and enters one's character, rendering it pathetically enslaved to base passions. The clamor of the passions (feelings) then deafens one's moral sense, the compelling energy of the passions (feelings) determines one's actions, one's independent self-mastery is lost, and one's freedom is limited to a choice among contending masters and forms of obedience. A virtuous person is one with whom the voluntary suppression of unbridled feelings and immoral passions is habitual. Under the law of habit, which states that through repetition our physical as well as mental faculties acquire dexterity and strength, the moral desires of the virtuous person prevail more and more uniformly. Under the same conditions, the vices, denied the nourishment of gratification, become weaker and eventually atrophy. Virtue indicates the subjection of craving immoral desires. Such virtuous refinement secures peace, harmony, and the dignity of moral excellence. In conquering one's

passions, one becomes truly free. However, until virtue is fully perfected, debatable whether possible in this life, there is continual strife between "the lusts of the flesh" and one's higher reasoning and conscience.

**Courage.** One meaning of courage is fearlessness, the capacity to do what we must as if there were no fear of pain, injury, or death. This is the courage of action, the sort of courage that manifests as physical strength, feats of endurance, and of fortitude. Fortitude is a reservoir of moral and spiritual strength to sustain action when flesh and blood can carry on no further. Aquinas adds that the courageous "face danger on account of the good of virtue, which is the abiding object of their will, however great the danger may be." In contrast to the courage of action, there is the courage of the mind: steeling the will, reinforcing its resolutions, and turning the mind relentlessly toward reason, toward seeking and facing the truth. The ability to face, without flinching, the hard questions reality can pose constitutes the temper of a courageous mind. The courage of the mind is the ability to stand alone in the face of opposing opinion, when one's own convictions have the strength of reason, even when that opposition turns to unpopularity, ostracism, embarrassment, or other social or physical injury. Aquinas defines fortitude (a synonym of courage) as "a disposition whereby the soul is strengthened for that which is in accord with reason, against any assaults of the passions or the toil involved in any work to be done." Fortitude is the steady purpose of mind that enables a person to undergo pain, peril, or danger when judged the right thing to do.

**Justice.** Sometimes the first principle of justice is stated, simply and elegantly, "Seek good; avoid evil." A slight expansion gives "Do good to others, injure no one, and render unto others what is their due." Aristotle says, "The just is the lawful and fair," and "We call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its lawful components for the political society." Therefore, justice is the virtue that promotes fairness, the common good, and the concern of one individual for the rights and well-being of others. As discussed in the section on life, justice serves the good of each person involved; injustice favors one at the expense of others. Again, Aristotle, "Justice, alone of the virtues, is thought to be 'another's good,' because it is related to our neighbor. Justice alone, of all the virtues, implies the notion of duty." Fair dealing in the exchange of goods, determined by objective relations of equality, is the substance of justice as a virtue. It embraces all the moral virtues as far as they direct their actions to the good of others. For Aquinas, justice is submission of the body to the mind, of the mind to reason, and of reason to God.

**Temperance.** Aquinas defines temperance as "a disposition of the soul, moderating any passions or acts, to keep them within bounds." Socrates persuades Calicles that "instead of the intemperate and unsatisfied life, one should choose that which is orderly and sufficient and has a due provision for daily needs." The intemperate person, he says, is like "a vessel full of holes, because it can never be

satisfied." The temperate individual can satisfy his or her desires, but the intemperate, of unlimited desire, can never pause in his or her search for more and more pleasure, and never finds happiness. When reason does not regulate desire for bodily pleasures and delights, Aristotle tells us that such desire "will go to great lengths, for in an irrational being the desire for pleasure is insatiable even if it tries every source of gratification," and, "The appetite in a temperate man should harmonize with reason." Temperance teaches us to avoid excess and to avoid the development of any licentious or vicious habit. Emphasis is due, in any discussion of temperance, that the meaning of the virtue is for moderation and decidedly not abstinence. Unrestricted indulgence in food, sex, alcohol, spending, possessions, ambition, fame, power, laziness, or any other passion will prove to be its own punishment. However, the virtue of temperance is about moderately partaking in such pleasures, not the complete avoidance of them. Some passions and behaviors, however, are so destructive to the life, liberty, and happiness of oneself and others that we must exclude them outright, such as greed, envy, theft, murderous rage, dishonesty, illicit drugs, and manipulation or exploitation of others. (This is not a complete list.)

**Prudence.** Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment. While overstated, this maxim points to the meaning of prudence. For Aristotle, prudence is "practical wisdom": "Such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience [rather than instruction]." The prudent individual knows how to deliberate or calculate well about how he ought to do things. Prudence is skill of mind in choosing among alternative courses of action, but it does not require as much rational power as memory and imagination, to project past experience into the future. As justice seems primarily to be a virtue that characterizes one's duty to others, we can view prudence as duty to oneself, in that prudence directs the choices necessary in the pursuit and achievement of happiness. Yet Aristotle states that, "It is impossible to be practically wise without being good. Virtue makes us aim at the right goal, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means," which is like a thought of Aquinas, "One cannot have prudence unless one has the moral virtues, since prudence is right reason about things to be done, to which end man is rightly disposed by moral virtue." Prudence teaches us to regulate our lives and actions according to the dictates of reason.

**Wisdom.** Aristotle distinguishes between prudence, or practical wisdom, and philosophical or speculative wisdom, and philosophical wisdom is the highest form of knowledge: "The end of theoretical knowledge is Truth, while that of practical knowledge is action." Tolstoy writes in *War and Peace* that the highest wisdom "is but one science – the science of the whole – the science explaining the whole creation and man's place in it. To receive that science, it is necessary to purify and to renew one's inner self. To attain this end, we have the light called conscience that God has implanted in our souls." Wisdom unites knowledge and action, as well as knowledge

and understanding. The pursuit of wisdom is a pursuit of discerning good from evil. Aristotle refers to both types of wisdom when he says, "Each one has just so much happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action." In the opening pages of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies wisdom with the supreme philosophical science – the science that investigates first principles and causes. Thus, he also identifies it with theology, for, as he says, "God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle." It is "the most desirable [science] on its own account and for the sake of knowing. It alone exists for its own sake." The Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures) and the Christian Testament speak of reverential awe of God as the beginning of wisdom, and that wisdom comes to humanity not through efforts at learning or discovery, but only as a divine gift.

**Dignity.** The word dignity derives from the Latin *dignus*, worthy. The American Heritage Dictionary gives us "The quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect," "Inherent nobility and worth: the dignity of honest labor," and "Poise and self-respect. Stateliness and formality in manner and appearance." Dignity (positive self-regard) is the reward of following an inner disposition of the will to do what Reason judges to be right in the particular case. To maintain one's self-respect one must obey a standard of conduct set for oneself. While duty rests upon a set of laws applicable to all, dignity begins with self-consciousness of virtue in the individual alone. It differs from the confusing term "pride," for while pride can also reflect a sense of confidence in one's intrinsic worth or achievements, more often it implies arrogance, clearly a vice in any system of ethics. Dignity avoids the extremes of hubris and self-deprecation. The dignified individual neither underestimates his own worth nor overestimates himself, seeking recognition out of proportion to his abilities.

**Modesty.** Modesty is the counterpart to Dignity – when one is confident in one's own intrinsic worth, there is no need to seek fame, glory, or undue attention. The American Heritage Dictionary tells us that modesty is "Reserve or propriety in speech, dress, or behavior, lack of pretentiousness, and simplicity." Mr. Webster speaks of "that lowly temper which accompanies a moderate estimate of one's own worth and importance; absence of self-assertion, arrogance, and presumption; humility respecting one's own merit." T. H. Huxley reminds us, "Thoughtfulness for others, generosity, modesty, and self-respect, are the qualities that make a real gentleman, or lady, as distinguished from the veneered article that commonly goes by that name."

**Love.** One dictionary defines love as "goodwill in action." My own is "a commitment to the long-term well-being of the beloved through benevolence and generosity." Neither of these characterizes this most universal of human feelings and desires as an emotion, but rather as actions. In any dictionary, love has two distinct definitions, strangely opposite one another. One is "my desire to possess, adore, and

take enjoyment from you by satisfying my passions," and the other is "my desire to be generous to you, to give you what you want and need, with indifference to my cost or benefit." Often, the first takes on a sexual implication, becoming synonymous with "puppy-love," lust, and technical terms such as concupiscence and cupidity. The second is identical with the Greek word, *agape*, which is the love of parents for their children, the love of God for humanity, and unconditional love for anyone. The first is selfish, and typically violates the principles discussed above under life and justice, that no human being can morally be treated as an object for the gratification of the desires of another. The second is not completely unselfish but reflects a virtuous choice in recognizing that giving to one's beloved enhances one's own pursuit of happiness. I suggest that genuine love seeks to give rather than to get, or to get only as the result of giving. Love can even be satisfied in the contemplation of the beloved's beauty or goodness. *Omnia vincit amor*, Virgil writes, "Love conquers all."

## **Free Will**

Do we possess genuine free will in our thoughts, words, and deeds, or are they all merely the inevitable outcome of our circumstances? Are we under the complete control of fate? Unfortunately, there are many logical defenses in the history of philosophy supporting a conclusion of determinacy, and none for free will. Yet philosophers agree that the universal experience of Man is that he is ultimately free to exercise his will to choose as he alone decides to do. Though subjective, the complete universality of this perception is the primary argument in favor of free will. There is another argument by consequence: Unless people are actually and truly free, we cannot justly be held responsible for our actions, any more than we can for the date of our birth or the color of our eyes.

According to a line of reasoning set out by Aquinas, will is rational appetite; Man necessarily desires happiness, but he can freely choose between different forms of it. Free will is simply this elective power. Infinite Good (the Beatific Vision) is not visible to the intellect in this life, and therefore we cannot fully and accurately see, and then choose what actually our best good in any situation is. Therefore, no perceivable good in this life completely satiates or irresistibly entices the will.

The good that we perceive presents itself in many forms – the pleasant, the prudent, the right, the noble, and the beautiful – and in reflective or deliberative action we can choose among these. When we reflect with awareness of the moral quality of a good, comes the recognition that we must decide between right and wrong. It is then that our consciousness is truly choosing freely, and it is then that we are fully responsible and accountable for our thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions.

## Conclusions

1. An individual's value does not come from wealth, physical appearance, or achievement, but from the extent to which the Universal Values are expressed in his or her soul. This most commonly translates as: Honesty, Integrity, and Compassion.
2. Behaving virtuously is the way to achieve happiness. Suffering follows vice and indulgence. Immediate gratification of impulses and desires is largely synonymous with vice, and leads to brief pleasure, yet prolonged suffering. Delayed gratification is to the same extent synonymous with virtue, and leads to brief discomfort, yet prolonged well-being.
3. The habitual exercise of virtue increases our moral freedom. The practice of yielding to impulse results in weakening self-control. The faculty of inhibiting strong desires, of concentrating attention on future goods, and of reinforcing the higher though less compelling motives, will undergo atrophy if unused. In proportion as a person habitually yields to intemperance or some other vice, his freedom diminishes, and he does in a true sense sink into slavery – slavery to his passions and feelings. The more frequently one restrains mere impulse, checks inclination towards the pleasant, puts forth self-denial in the face of temptation, and steadily aims at a virtuous life, the more does that one increase in self-command, self-mastery, and control of his own life, and therefore does that one increase in personal freedom and happiness.

## A Practical Postscript

The Christian Testament forbids us to pass judgment upon others, and the teachings of Taoism and Zen Buddhism expound the folly and the harm that comes from doing so. Nevertheless, it is wise to exercise some kind of evaluation, which I will call discernment, in our choice of friends and romantic partners, and in our own moral inventory or daily self-examination. To begin with, is the person in question a slave to passion, or does s/he enjoy an abundance of freedom and reason? How thoroughly does the person exhibit the values and virtues listed above? Are they habitual in his or her life, or is s/he acquainted with them at all? Finally, is the person, as defined in this essay, truly happy? And of course, you may ask these questions of yourself as well.