

Can We Choose Our Moods?

By Dr. Marcel



Do we have a choice in determining what mood we want to be in? The answer is not that easy. If the mood arises from a biochemical imbalance, then a biochemical approach to achieving balance needs to be strongly considered as part of a comprehensive, integrated protocol. This discussion is not what this column is about.

Years ago, long before I became a doctor, two friends and I started a company that was engaged in the field of environmental politics. We were young, idealistic and committed 24/7 to preserving the health of our planet. We would not be swayed from our focus. But as everyone either knows or suspects, the political arena is not known for inspiring and nourishing higher consciousness. The gods of the political environment in which we worked were ego gratification, money and power. As our principles were continuously battered and began to falter, one of my partners declared that he was done with idealistic optimism and was going to approach his work with a cynicism equal to that of the politicians we were trying to influence to do good works. **Spreading as rapidly as a cholera epidemic, his cynicism infected everyone around him. I was profoundly infected as well.** Paramhansa Yogananda says that environment is stronger than will. I can vouch first-hand how true this is.

A couple of years later, I finally noticed how utterly unhappy and unfulfilled I was. I was sinking into despair. My reactivity in my daily activities was molded by my cynicism and negativity. Furthermore, I had no idea of how to break the pattern. So, I quit the job that once fulfilled me, sold my interest in the company I had co-founded, went to live in Asia with Dr. Connie and spent the next twenty years trying to climb out of the soul-numbing, living death I had created for myself. Here is what I learned.

1) Biochemistry aside, we create the substance of our perceptions and responses to events in our world. We make choices on how to respond in all situations. Making the conscious, positive choice is easier said than done. Many of our responses tend toward the side of unconscious reactions. A reactive approach to issues is similar to deep cynicism – it is a pattern that defies change.

2) Vipassana (Mindfulness) training is almost essential in re-programming our experiences. During the 10-day, 11 hours-a-day training, **the essence of the teaching was to observe without judgement or reaction.** A fly landed on my nose during meditation. Rather than swat it away, I observed its ticklish journey across my skin until it got bored with me and flew away. We were taught how to observe the knee pain from extended, no-movement, meditation periods then channel the pain into the Earth, rather than shifting to a more comfortable position.

3) Finding a resonant spiritual path and attuning as deeply as possible, in every conscious moment, to the teachings of that path can break almost any negative pattern. All true spiritual paths in essence say the same things: seek God in the depths of your own being and learn to recognize God in all creation. The true spiritual path will offer guidance on how to achieve “God-consciousness” in every waking moment. As knee pain is surrendered into the Earth, emotional and spiritual pain is surrendered to God.

4) When the great saints and sages of all time are asked what is the message they would give to others, invariably they answer, “be kind.” Kind thoughts, kind words and kind actions. Again, easier said than done. But if someone is unkind to you, rather than respond in-kind or harbor a negative thought, think of how painful it must be to be in their consciousness and offer them a blessing instead.

One final story. Dr. Connie and I lived in Japan for many years. While there, we established a spiritual center where people from many countries would gather each Sunday for a spiritual service. Among the many people who came each Sunday was an American young man and his lovely Japanese wife. Every time he opened his mouth, the man would utter a negative comment. After a few weeks of trying to be understanding and sympathetic, we changed our approach. We responded to each of his negative comments with a positive comment. After countless exchanges of this sort, he finally broke down in tears, finally conscious of the level of his expression.

Become the light that banishes the darkness.