

Words of Wisdom

from



Dear Taking It Lightly graduate,

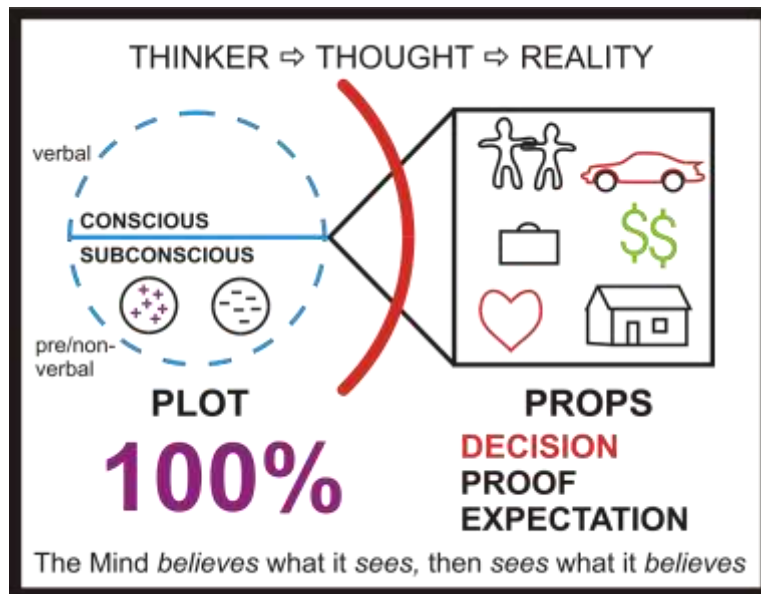
Remember sitting in your chair on Friday night, wondering what on earth this was going to be all about, what was going to happen next, why I am here, etc, etc.???? I remember, and I also remember that Sunday afternoon I wasn't so sure I could tell anyone what I learned five years ago last Friday night! So here are the lectures from Friday night and a few pieces from Sunday that it might be helpful to review.

This is not confidential information,. You can share it with others when you tell them about your experience of the course. Maybe it will help them to figure out how to move forward. Maybe it will help them decide to do the weekend and become a part of the Taking It Lightly community.

In keeping with our mission to make the world a safer place,

Patricia Clason, founder Taking It Lightly

Thinker ⇒ Thought ⇒ Reality / Personal Responsibility



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This **circle** represents the mind. Notice that there are spaces in the circle. These spaces represent the fact that we are all inter-**connected**—that there is an energy, a life force that flows through us all. Some call it God, some call it Infinite Love or Infinite Intelligence, depending on their religious or spiritual beliefs. It is the energy that connects us all. These spaces also represent the fact that information is always flowing through our minds, no matter how closed some minds may appear to be.

In the mind there are two **levels of awareness**. The first is the **conscious** or **verbal** aspect of our mind—you know, that little voice in your head, the conversations that you have with yourself on a daily basis: “What will I wear today? What will I eat today? Do I really want to do this seminar?” The second level is the **subconscious** or **pre/non-verbal** level of awareness where all of our experiences are stored.

Pre-verbal because we begin recording our experiences before we have words. Approximately three to four months in utero, the brain is sufficiently developed to record our experiences. It records those experiences in feelings, as painful or pleasurable.

Non-verbal because in the moment that something happens to us we simply experience it with our senses. Seconds, minutes, days, or weeks later when we think about and recall the experience we add our thoughts or words to it.

Early in utero, and when we are first born, our minds are a lot like an old box **camera**—we have **no ability** to pick and choose what we want to record. I have a question for you: Have you ever had a picture taken of yourself that you didn’t like? Why didn’t you like it? Most people don’t like pictures of themselves because the pictures don’t look the way they’d like to **think** they look. However, a picture looks exactly the way you look in that moment—bad hair day, spinach in your teeth, etc. The camera records it like it is, not how you would like it to be.

A camera processes visual information, and records that information in terms of light and dark. In a similar way, our minds at that time of life process experiential/feeling information; thus, we record information in terms of pleasure and pain.

Imagine a baby in the **womb**. ***For most babies***, everything is cozy and warm and all the baby’s needs are met; all babies have to do is be and grow. This is great for about eight to nine months. Then one day, the contractions start, the baby begins to feel pushed around, and eventually the baby is evicted — kicked out of this wonderful place. Now, as adults, we don’t think of it that way. We think, “Oh how wonderful—a new baby has been born.” However, for the infant, the birth process is quite painful and a big shock. After being born the doctor picks the baby up and **slaps** it on the butt. Now you and I know that the doctor does this so that the baby would cry and breathe after the umbilical cord is cut. All the *baby* knows is that until that point, existence was mostly warm and comfortable, and now it has become very painful! So that pain was recorded too! Then the nurse cleans the baby off with a **towel**. After having never felt anything against its skin except amniotic fluid, the towel feels like sandpaper, and that hurts too. Fortunately for most babies there is also some pleasure in this process—maybe it gets to be put on mom’s chest, where it hears a familiar heartbeat and voice, maybe getting to nurse, and that feels good. Then dad holds the baby for a while and puts a diaper on and sticks the baby with a pin (those were the days before pampers!). And so it goes, on and on.

Because we processed what happened to us by what was painful and what was pleasurable, we ended up sorting our experiences into those two categories. In effect, these early experiences were the first frames of the movie of our life. We made decisions about how life would be based on our experiences, and recorded more and more footage.

As we developed more conscious thought, we began to pay more attention to our learning environments, such as home and school. We watched our family interact, making observations about how to express love, anger or control. We heard fights and learned about winning and losing, and how to fight fair. We tried out behaviors and "recorded" information about what to do to get approval. We were not conscious of doing this, and yet we were filming our movies of how to feel, show feelings, be with people, and succeed or fail. We then projected those movies out onto our screen of life. These movies were about people and relationships, home, money, work and toys. As similar experiences continued to happen, we added them to our movies as our proof that indeed that is the way life is.

Another question for you:

“What do you do when you go to a movie in a movie theater and you don’t like what’s playing on the screen?” Think of *your* usual responses when you don’t like the movie. **I suggest that the way we handle parts of life we don’t like is similar to how we handle movies we don’t like.**

When life isn’t going the way we want, some of us **sleep** through life or use drugs or alcohol to **numb** out so we won’t see how bad it is. Some of us who **stuff our faces** with popcorn in the theater might eat our way through life. Some of us who complain in the theater **talk to our friends** about how awful life is and never do anything to change it. Some of us **walk out** of the movie, which in life is checking out through addictions or, in the extreme, suicide, etc. These are all coping mechanisms that allowed us to survive or avoid the pain in life. However, while they allowed us to survive, they didn’t change the movie, just like anything we do in the movie theater doesn’t change the film that’s playing in the projection room. We do many things to avoid PAIN and get PLEASURE.

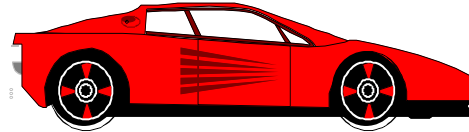
Now, I have noticed that no one ever mentions **rearranging characters** on the screen. Of course not, if you did that in a movie theater they would lock you up! Yet in life, that is often *exactly* what we do. We *try* to rearrange the characters on the screen—new house, new job, new car, new mate, new city. Have you ever made a change like this—or watched someone else make a change like this, only to find that in three months, six months, or a year down the road, the same or very similar things eventually happen again? That’s because it doesn’t work to change the props of life because the original PLOT of your movie is still playing up in the projection booth.

What does work is taking **100% responsibility** for our lives, recognizing that our minds are the projector in the projection booth.

***We are the ones who control how we behave, re-act
or respond in any situation.
We have the ability to decide what film we want to play!***

Actions going on in the theater or attempts to change the movie up on the screen do not affect the film on the projector. If we really want life to be different, we have to change the movie—the film—that is playing in our minds—we have to change the **PLOT**, which means changing what we believe and how we re-act in life.

I've already spoken about the initial decisions we make early on about how life is painful and/or pleasurable. Let's explore even further HOW this process works.



Car Accident Analogy (DECISION)

Let's say that when you were little, you and your family were driving down the highway on your way to visit someone. You were in the back seat with your seat belt off looking out the back window. In front of the car was a big semi. You noticed a little red sports car approaching from behind going 500 miles an hour – or so it seemed to you because you were pretty little. The driver of the sports car decided to pass the family car and didn't see the oncoming traffic because of the semi in front of your car. So it swerved in between the family car and the semi, forcing dad, who was driving, to swerve onto the shoulder of the road. Your car spun out and everyone was thrown around inside. You and your siblings were shook up and crying. Dad's forehead was bleeding a little because he hit it on the windshield. This was scary stuff! In the middle of all these emotions, you made a decision. Since little children think in very concrete ways, you probably decided that little red sports cars were dangerous and to be avoided. Now you have a belief or a filter that affects how you perceive reality.

Then 20 years later, you are driving along the expressway and see an accident that just happened. In the middle of a eight-car pile-up is a SUV, a sedan, and a little red sports car. Which car will you assume is at fault?

It is natural to assume that the red sports car was at fault, because of the previous decision or belief about red sports cars. That's why ten different people can see an accident and each have a different story of what happened—they each have their own version of the filter. We call it the Porsche filter, in honor of the little red sports car. The mind believed what it saw – little red sports cars are dangerous – and then sees what it believes – little red sports car in an accident, more proof that little red sports cars are dangerous.

Continue to imagine that you are little – about three – playing with a ball in front of the house. Mom is outside working in the garden. Your ball rolls into the street. You go after it. Mom sees this, drops her gardening tools and comes running after you. She grabs you by the shoulders in a vice grip, her face is very red and she yells at you, “Don't you ever do that again!” Now do you suppose your three-year-old self said, “Mommy, thank you for saving my life!”? **NOOO!** You think very concretely at this point in life. You would probably cry and say, “I was just playing!” **AND you make a DECISION that “It's not okay to play and have fun”** or some similar decision, and you begin to operate out of that decision.



The Trophy (PROOF)

As life goes on, every time you have experiences similar to those in your movie you add them to this movie/decision. Imagine that you are ten, and you're watching TV and eating popcorn and soda with some friends. One of them picks up a round couch pillow and Frisbees it across the room at you. You send it back. Pretty soon everyone is laughing and having lots of fun while it flies all over the room. Then the pillow knocks over a trophy of Dad's and it breaks. Dad comes in and starts yelling at you, "You, up to your room. The rest of you kids, out of here!" This becomes proof of your decision "When I am having fun, something goes wrong. It's not okay to have fun."

Home Late (EXPECTATIONS)

Eventually, we have enough proof that we begin to operate out of EXPECTATION that the same thing will happen again.

Imagine, that you are living on your own; you have a job and a significant other. On Sunday, you and your significant other decide that it is time for your parents to meet. You make arrangements to get together on Friday night for dinner at 6pm. You and your partner go your separate ways, working all week. You end up having the week from hell. Everything that could go wrong goes wrong. On Friday afternoon, about 4pm, one of your work buddies says, "Let's go out for a pizza and something to drink and forget about this place." You think that's a pretty good idea, so a bunch of you head to the local pizza place, turning off your cell phone so the boss can't reach you.

You order some pizzas, play some darts or video games, and complain about the week. A few more folks show up. You are enjoying yourself, glad to be not thinking about work, timelines, obligations, etc. You order more pizza and continue to play and have fun with your friends.

Then you look at your watch – it's eight o'clock. Suddenly you remember – you were supposed to meet your significant other and both sets of parents at 6:00 for dinner. Your next thought is "Oh S--t! I'm in deep do-do now!" as you realize that they are probably done with dinner and have likely gone home feeling pretty angry with you.

You rush out the door to drive to your significant other's place.

Now significant other is at home, going through what all of us go through when someone we care about is late. First we get worried that something went wrong. Then we get angry that they're late and didn't call. Then as it gets later we get worried again, and then angry, and then worried, etc.

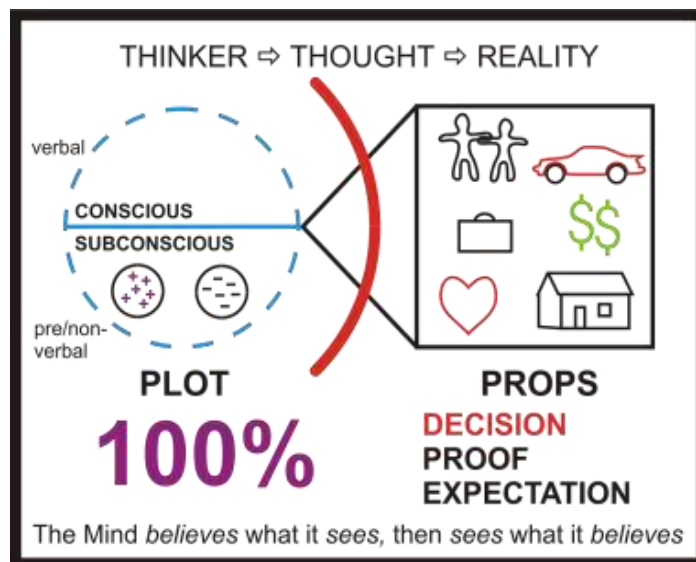
Imagine that when you knock on that door, your significant other is in the worried mode and says, “Oh Honey, I’m so glad you’re home and you’re okay. When you didn’t answer your cell phone, I thought maybe something happened and I was about to call the police or the hospitals.” I know it’s hard to believe, just imagine that is what happens.

Your *expectation* that there would be anger is so strong that you respond, “I’m a big person, I can take care of myself!” Significant other responds with, “Well, pardon me for loving you!” and you are off to the Friday Night Fights!

None of you would have driven home thinking, “If my significant other is in the worried mode, I’ll just say something stupid to create a fight.” And yet isn’t that exactly what you did? You created the situation to fulfill your expectation. Our expectations can become so strong that they simply become habits of thought or neural pathways. In Emotional Intelligence, this process of our expectations taking charge and running the show is called hijacking of the brain. It happens at a speed 80,000 times faster than our conscious thought process. This is why it is so important to change the movie, thereby creating new neural pathways, by changing our thoughts and our reactions to our circumstances.

At this point, your mind is not seeing reality as it is—instead, you are seeing what you believe.

*The mind believes what it sees,
and then sees what it believes!*



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The **plus and minus** signs in the subconscious represent the **emotional charge** on our experiences. We made a decision as the result of emotional charge around painful experiences that life was a certain way and we needed to protect ourselves from that pain. Every time something similar happened, we decided that was **proof** that our original decision was right and added more charge to the decision. Eventually we **expected** life to be painful based on those repeated “re-decisions” and the **built-up emotional charge** around them.

When we become aware of the movie, or plot, we have playing in the projection booth of our mind and take **100% responsibility** for it, we are then able to make a decision and take action to release or neutralize the built-up emotional charge (make the big mark smaller/thinner) so that the old plot doesn't run the show any more. Then we are not operating at the effect of the built-up emotional charge, **we are choosing** how to react, feel, behave or respond in any situation. This is the process of building new neural pathways or new plots.

We create new and more pleasurable movie footage by making a new decision, choosing a new plot, that life is good, we are good and deserving, etc. Over time we create experiences that support *this* new decision—**new proof**—and eventually we have an **expectancy** that new and good things can and will happen in our lives.

Changing the movie is the only option for true and lasting change.



Our Movie About Emotions

Emotions are energy in motion = E-Motion.

What we think about our emotions causes us to control them in a particular way. Many psychology books describe mad, sad and scared as the negative emotions. When we feel any of these three emotions, we even say, “I feel BAD.” When we feel glad, we say, “I feel GOOD.”

The implication is that we shouldn't feel mad, sad or scared - especially around other people so that they don't have to deal with our emotions. Why, even glad is frowned upon in many situations, i.e. children should be seen and not heard, "Quiet down, you're having too much fun in there!" And we would never think of walking into work and announcing "WOW, am I glad to be here today!"

MAD - SAD - SCARED - GLAD +

So the value judgment on our emotions that they are "bad" or at the very least not okay in many circumstances, causes us to deny or suppress them or not share them with others.

Creek Analogy

Our emotions at first were like a free-flowing creek or river.



Think about babies—when they feel sad, they cry; when they are happy, they giggle; etc. And they don't care what you think or feel about it. Their emotions flow freely and fully.

Then things happen that hurt—we decide that we don't want to feel that hurt again and so we put a boulder in the creek to stop the flow of the feelings.

For example, when Mom yelled at you for running into the street, your response might have been to cry. Mom then said to you, "Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about." **So you then added a boulder to stop the emotion of sad, because it wasn't okay.**

.....then when you knocked over Dad's trophy and he was yelling at you, you angrily said, "But dad I was only playing." Dad slapped you and said, "Don't you ever talk to me like that again." **So you put in another boulder to stop the emotion of angry.**

.....and the day that the family car was forced off the road by the little red sports car, you were really scared and crying in the back seat. Dad was so upset by what happened and he yelled at you "Shut up, you're okay." Your feelings were discounted and it hurt to be yelled at when you didn't do anything wrong. **So you put in another boulder to stop being scared and hurt.**

We had to stop the flow of emotions because we thought the emotions caused the pain and we had to stop the pain in order to survive.

More things happen that hurt—more boulders. Eventually, we have a dam, keeping all of our feelings from flowing freely. What happens when water builds up behind a dam? **PRESSURE**. Sometimes, a little will splash over the top. The splash over the top is a disproportionate response and a sure sign that there is too much pressure.

A friend of mine who is a Vietnam veteran went to see a movie. He didn't know that parts of the movie were about Vietnam. Something in the movie struck a chord for him and he sat in his seat sobbing through the rest of the movie and all through a second showing. His emotions were not disproportionate to his Vietnam experience. They were, however, disproportionate to a movie.

I can remember having a rough week at work, and a frustrating evening at home, then going into the bathroom to prepare for sleep. There on the sink was the toothpaste, crusty and yucky because, once again, someone was sloppy about using it and left the cap off! I yelled, "How many times do I have to ask you to put the cap back on the toothpaste? You never.... I always..." My emotions exploded quite disproportionately to a little bit of dried-up toothpaste.

*One of two things eventually happens when the pressure is **too** great—we either:*

- **IMPLODE** - which could be heart attacks, strokes, migraines, etc., or we
- **EXPLODE** - which is going out of control and hurting others, like killing kids at McDonald's with a machine gun.

During the weekend we worked on **taking some of the boulders out of the creek**, and finding out that it can be safe to feel and express all of our feelings and that we can take care of ourselves so we don't get hurt again, and **we** don't have to explode or implode.

Now, if you literally had big boulders in the mountain stream, and you wanted to get rid of the pressure, what would you do? There are several ways to move the boulders:

DYNAMITE blow up the dam which looks a lot like explosion - OR -

PICK at them by yourself, which might take forever or talking about it and not taking action or taking very little action - OR -

ROLL them out of the way—needs the **help** of others and requires that we **accept all of our feelings** as okay and learn to express them in a way that is safe for ourselves and others.

Our value judgments of emotions as either “good” or “bad” keep us from being okay with feeling and expressing our emotions.

These value judgments keep us from being flexible, or going with the flow of the creek.

The way to get water/emotion flowing again is through **ACCEPTANCE** of them, which turns all the emotions into a plus or assets we have that make us more alive and make life more exciting and enjoyable. When we accept our emotions, and we can express our emotions, we become more “real”.

MAD + SAD + SCARED + GLAD +

*The Emotions are not what caused the pain,
it was the blocking of the emotions that caused the pain.*

Releasing the emotions and relieving the pressure + accepting emotions as energy in motion and a valuable and important part of our humanness = full, free and safe expression of emotion in the present moment.

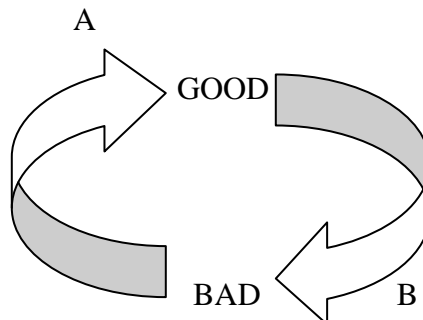
Remember the Roller Coaster?

On Sunday afternoon we talked of the Good/Bad Circle and the Roller Coaster – here are some thoughts to remind you.

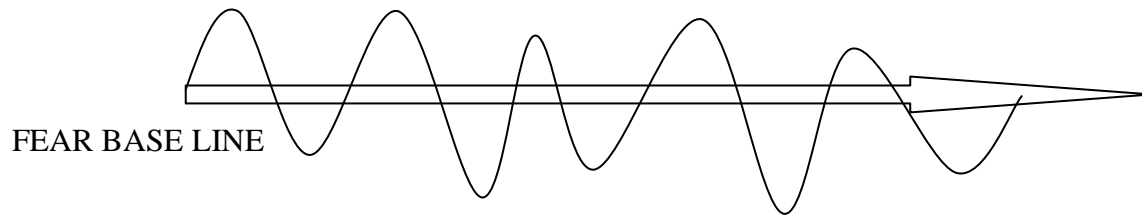
Think of a time when things were really going along well, and you were getting what you want. Life was just humming along, going really well. (See point A in the diagram below.)

What usually happens to people at point A is the thought, “This is simply too good to be true. Something has to go wrong.” Well, “Something has to go wrong” is a thought, and it is creative. Consequently, something will go wrong.

And so you get to be “right,” and things get worse (see point B). Eventually, thank goodness, most of us will then say, “It just can’t get any worse.” “It just can’t get any worse” is a positive thought in disguise, and it, too, is creative. So things get better. Until you get to point A again, and the cycle continues. Most people spend their entire lives on this good/bad circle. If you were to draw it, it might look something like this:

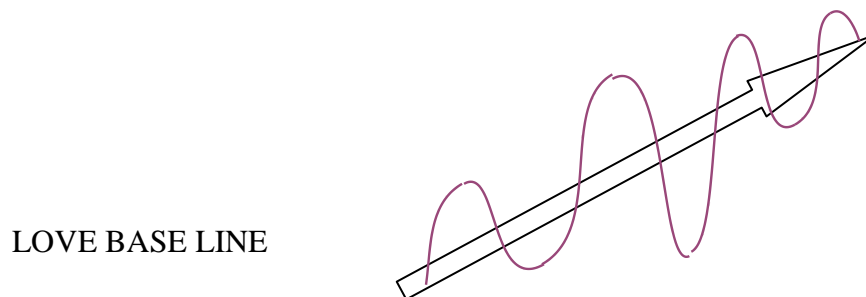


Or if it were along a straight line, it might look like this:



Almost like a roller coaster, you are the rider, someone else is in charge and all you can do is hold on and scream!

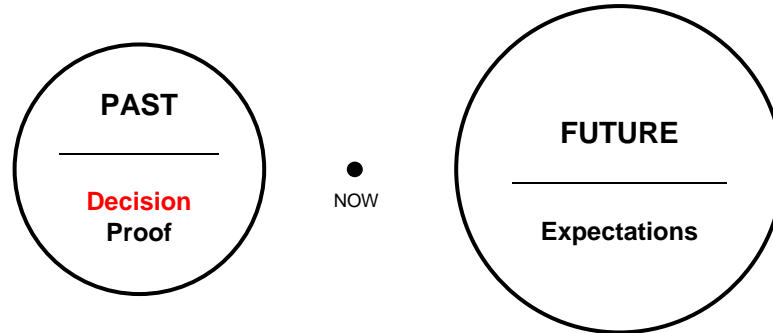
As you begin to step back and observe your life, you can start choosing your new thoughts, filming a new movie and enjoying the adventure because you are on the love base line! Life will start to look like this:



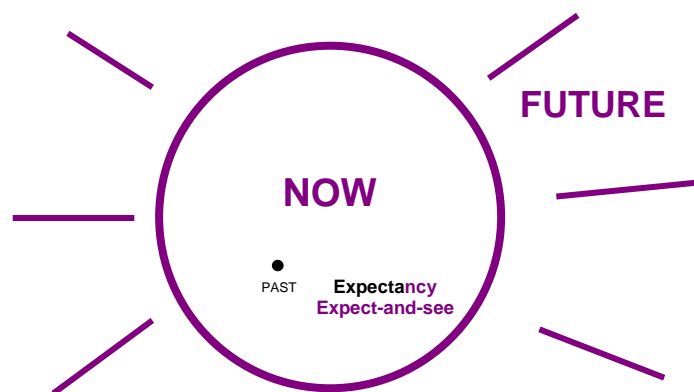
You will still be experience the ups and downs, though you will probably find that the lows will be higher than your previous highs, and the highs are higher than ever before. And as you take more responsibility for your responses to life, you will feel and be more “at cause” and instead of holding on for dear life on a ride you have no control over, you will throw your hands up in the air and enjoy the ride! You will see each descent as an opportunity for learning and growing, for transformation, and so you won’t resist it and be scared. You will learn from it and grow – making it a “good” experience.

*When we stop resisting life,
take charge of our responses,
our thoughts, beliefs and emotions,
we can enjoy the ride and the adventure!*

Past ⇒ Present ⇒ Future Orientation



When we lived life on a baseline of fear, we viewed the past and the future as larger than the present. We were not in the moment aware of what was really going on because of being stuck in the past—viewing life through our Porsche filters—or being afraid of the future because of our past decisions, proof, and future **EXPECTATIONS**. The past seemed bigger or larger than the present. We feared the future because of the pictures we projected on the future based on our past experiences. The future seemed beyond our control or limited. We know the end of our movie before we even run it!



When in actuality, the past is inside of us, yet is very small compared to the present moment. When we are in the ‘now’ we see what is happening as opposed to what we fear will happen in the future. When we act in the present we effect change.

The future is an unlimited potential—that is always surrounding us. We have no way of knowing what the future will hold for us and will be freer to be in the moment if we do not base our predictions of the future on our past experiences.

Remember Friday night when we talked about making decisions, acquiring proof and then having expectations of the future? Well, what works better is to...

**Have great expectancy (for miracles perhaps?)
and no expectations.**

Expectancy is a state of mind. Instead of having **specific** pictures (or expectations) of what will happen in the future based on past experiences, we will be open to new options and new experiences. We can let go of having to control it all because we are afraid and begin instead to trust the process of life because we are feeling safer. This allows us to experience more aliveness and more enjoyment of the present moment.

*When in the now, we see what really is happening
rather than our fears about what is going to happen.
When we act in the present, we can effect change.*

Pony story

Once upon a time there was an adolescent boy who always had a great attitude about life. He was always seeing something positive in everything that happened. His parents became concerned about this because they feared that someday life would give him a trauma and he would be devastated because he wouldn't be prepared for it. So they decided to teach him a lesson.

His birthday was coming up in the summer and they decided to buy a truckload of horse manure and put it under the tree in the backyard as his birthday present. When the boy came home from playing with his friends on his birthday, they told him his birthday present was in the back yard.

He went into the yard and saw the pile of horse apples under the tree. He began to dig through the pile. His parents were astonished and asked him "What on earth are you doing?" The boy replied, "With all this horse do-do here, there's got to be a pony somewhere!"

The moral of the story is: you don't have to pick through the horse apples and analyze the content and do drama over each one as you go looking for the prize, or the "present." You can simply throw them behind you. Then you'll find that the horse apples have fertilized the garden! And whatever you find as you do this will be a gift as you learn from the process. This can only happen when you have great expectancy and no expectations.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness means making the choice to give forth of one's love again. Forgiveness is most important for the one who is doing the forgiving. When the pain has been great, forgiveness may not come easy. The anger needs to be expressed first and you have to know that you can and will protect yourself before you can find a place of compassion.

The compassion is an awareness that their actions came from their pain and a willingness for you to begin letting your love out to their hurt and wounded child. This does not mean you have to have contact with them in the present—it simply means that you can connect with their inner wounded child and send your love out to that child.

Forgiveness sometimes begins with:

- “I’d like to be able to forgive you however I am too angry and hurt to do that right now” and some time later evolve to.....
- “I know I can take care of myself so I’m willing to begin considering forgiveness” and then continue to evolve to....
- “I’m willing to start forgiving you and I still choose not to see you” to simply
- “I forgive you.”

*Forgiveness is choosing to give up my right to hurt you
for hurting me.*

This process is about loving, NOT about making the hurting OK.

*The stupid neither forgive nor forget,
the naïve forgive and forget,
the wise forgive and do not forget.*

-Thomas Szasz

Remember that it is for you that you are forgiving!

These are some of the options we discussed for forgiveness letters:

- Chinese and Native American tradition: burn it and send the words through the air via the smoke: Whenever someone has transgressed against you, write letter telling all your feelings, burn it and the smoke rises into the air, dissipating into the Universe and eventually reaches the heart of the person who transgressed against you.
- Japanese tradition—Origami – fold the note like a boat or swan and put it in flowing water. As it floats it will dissolve into the water, carrying the message into the universe.
- Mail it, with only a first name on the envelope (goes to dead letter office)
- Give it to them if appropriate—be very careful if you expressed any anger in the letter, you may not want to give it to them
- If you wrote it to yourself, read it to yourself everyday for 30 days or give it to a friend who can mail it to you when they think you should get it
- 21st century – shred it! Envisage the message being carried by the electricity/energy to the recipient
- Put it in a book that is spiritually inspiring to you – where you may find it again some day
- Write a letter to the Guardian Angel of the person you want to forgive
- Letter written in your non-dominant hand from your inner child to you

Is it all coming back to you now?

These were some of the key learning points in your Taking It Lightly weekend. From time to time, take this out and read it again.

Ask yourself - What is my next step in practicing personal responsibility and full, free and safe expression of my emotions? What can I do to make my world, and the world of those I love, a safer place? Who in my life would be helped if they knew this information?

Stephen Covey, a great leader of our times, tells us that if we teach what we have learned we will retain up to 90% of what we have learned. The research of William Glasser supports this statement.

Teach what you have learned. Teach it again to yourself. Share it with another.

Learn it. Do it. Teach it. Keep it.

And remember, the Taking It Lightly community can help you make your life better. Staff a weekend. Attend the Successful Living Seminars (again if you have already). Guaranteed you'll hear/learn something new!

Patricia Clason, Founder, Taking It Lightly

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