

LIVE WELL

# To think better, find your life's purpose



KEN O'DONNELL

In our life we learn many things; to walk, to sing, ride a bicycle—but no one ever teaches us how to think. We have to learn that for ourselves. Our teachers and parents probably did not know how to think either. The mind is a little like an airport. In an airport, planes are landing and taking off every few minutes or seconds, and our thoughts are like that. Emotions, impressions, memories all jumbled up and arriving and departing into and from the mind every few moments. Our excess of thinking is related to our not understanding our true value. The value we have as human beings, as children of God, as embodiments of spiritual, divine

qualities at a deeper level. We have forgotten them.

So, when we go out into the world each day, we really do not know who we are supposed to be. We have to be so many things to so many people, in so many different situations.

I believe it to be true that as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, 'we are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience'.

So, if I am this spiritual being going through this human experience, who am I? If I cannot see that, then definitely I will have to think more. If things become clearer, I will have to think less.

There are three limiting factors to a calm mind. Consciousness of the body, (its aches and pains and form and shape and gender), consciousness of my role (s) (parent, teacher, director, builder and so on), and my own story; the story of my life with the joys and traumas of what has happened to me, what I have made happen. The fact is, I am not a body, I am not



my role(s), I am not my story!

I have to widen my awareness; I am a soul, God's child with divine qualities — these qualities are inherent within me. I have to go beyond my little roles because I have a bigger role — if these things become clear, I will certainly think less and think better.

What is my bigger role? What is my purpose? If I am a child of God, a peaceful being, what's my purpose? If love is one of my deeper qualities, what's my purpose?

Purpose is connected with identity. I have a bigger role.

I can be in peace, full of love and serve others. We feel best when we feel useful; when we are serving and giving benefit to others.

If I am giving benefit, I will think less. If we occupy ourselves with giving, we won't have to think too much. When you give, the universe looks after you.

If I can calm myself, stop struggling and charging ahead and questioning so much, I will become still, and then I can reflect; just like the stillness of a lake reflects.

If I keep throwing rocks

into my own mind, I cannot reflect any more; I am forced to interpret, conjecture, wonder—then my thinking increases. With clarity there is no need to think any more.

The real purpose of my life is not something I invent; it's something I discover. It's already there. When I discover that, I think less, think better and live well.

Ken O'Donnell, an author and international consultant on strategy and leadership, is the director of Brahma Kumaris' services in South America

DISCOURSE

## FRIENDSHIPS SHOULD UPLIFT



DADI JANKI

Friendships on the spiritual path require caution, if we are to enjoy them fully. Sometimes we get so in-

involved in our relationships that our own individual spiritual progress is undermined. This is a mistake, because the very purpose of friendship is to uplift, and if I am remiss in my spiritual efforts, I will not be able to exert the positive influence of my own most elevated state. One should always maintain the intention of being of help to friends. But that help needs to be devoid of any desire for praise, and above any reactions of ill feeling or sorrow. Offering this kind of help will only further my spiritual growth.



EXPERIENCE

## WHEN KNOWLEDGE AND POWER DON'T BRING SUCCESS



B.K. SHEILU

Many people feel they are powerful, they know their strong points, but success eludes them. They are knowledgeable and have agreeable qualities, such as being loving and peaceful, yet they are not always content. They are also disciplined and diligent, but they fall short of their goals.

The reason for this is that they do not know how to use their knowledge and abilities at the right time in the right manner. As a result, their sterling qualities produce ordinary achievements. They may have excellent resources, but since they cannot use them effectively, they fail to get the expected benefits.

How do we learn to use our resources? For that we need the power to discern. If we do not have good discernment, we jump into situations that are best avoided, or step back when it is time to act.

Accurate discernment requires a clean and clear mind — one that is free from ego or any other vice, and also from the burden of past mistakes, which can cause guilt, fear, and low self-esteem.

That which is pure is clear. In the absence of purity, there is clutter and confusion in the mind, arising from the pulls and pressures exerted by vices, which do not allow the intellect to become clean. This inner cleanliness is a prerequisite for greatness.

Knowing how to use one's resources properly comes from practice. Merely having knowledge and appreciating its value is not enough. That is like acquiring something valuable and then locking it away. Accumulating resources and not using them, the way some



old people keep a bundle of wealth hidden away while living in poverty, does not help. The satisfaction of knowing or having something pales in comparison to that which comes from using those resources for the self and others.

It is said that donation does not diminish wealth — the universe gives you even more. Similarly, one's knowledge and powers grow with use, and one feels more fulfilled by the happiness that comes from

doing something worthwhile.

The experience of using resources hones one's power of discernment, and eventually one develops the ability to use the right power at the right time in the correct way.

This saves us from being deceived at a time of need, which in turn saves us from sorrow.

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MIND MATTERS

## HOW TO STAY CALM IN A CRISIS



DR GIRISH PATEL

Crises are not caused by situations, but by our state of mind. In the face of adverse situations, some people become hopeless and even end their lives, but there are others who are endlessly hopeful.

If we think right, we can turn a crisis into an opportunity. Instead of blaming or complaining about situations, we need to see what is in our control and act accordingly.

Experts have identified eighteen types of thoughts that create the feeling of a crisis.

One such way of thinking is called catastrophising — viewing a situation as considerably worse than it actually is. For example, if it is raining heavily, one will think it is a cloudburst; if one experiences a little pain in the chest, one will fear it is a heart attack.

Then there is overthinking, which leads to confusion

and panic.

Another kind of thought that creates the feeling of a crisis is, 'Why me?' A lot of people are known to react in this way when they are diagnosed with a chronic illness.

One more factor that creates crises is having an all-or-nothing approach — considering only the two extremes of a situation, with no middle position or compromise available. In life, things are not black and white, but of various shades in between.

Why do we need to be calm?

How does it help? Staying calm has multiple benefits. You get the right thought at the right time, you can take the correct decision, and act quickly.

When we are nervous and flustered, our thinking becomes muddled, and that delays remedial action. In nervous agitation one feels that one is doing a lot quickly, but in reality it is a calm mind that leads to early action.

How does one remain calm

in a difficult situation?

The world of seafaring offers a lesson. New sailors might try to flee a storm, but veteran seamen know that the best place to be in is the eye of the storm, where the sea is calm.

Similarly, we need to focus our attention inward, on our state of mind, instead of outside, on the situation, to resolve a crisis efficiently. At our core, we are souls, beings of peace. Turning inward and tapping into that peace helps to stabilize the mind.

At the same time, while hoping for the best, we should prepare ourselves, mentally and otherwise, for the worst, as that will save us excessive trauma.

Some people tend to create anticipatory stress by imagining all sorts of negative 'what if' scenarios. Instead, we need to accept whatever life brings to us — acceptance solves half of our problems. Acceptance, watching your mind to recognise unhelpful thought patterns, and thinking about the possible solutions are the three practical steps to resolving a crisis.

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POSITIVITY

## Enjoying the power of tolerance



MARCELO BULK

We are more likely to remember experiences that caused suffering rather than enjoyment: They leave more of a mark. Yet we all have the key to leaving suffering behind. The more content and fulfilled we are,

the more we are able to tolerate whatever life may bring.

You have to have tolerance, unless you are going to live in a cave, or surround yourselves with so many comforts that you are cushioned from the reality of life. But if you do that, think how many things you would miss!

It is important to change your attitude and awareness so that you see the positive side of life. Even if circumstances are not as you would wish and you are uncomfortable, if you deal with them by adjusting your perception, then you do not suffer.

Tolerance is required on many different levels. One is towards

the elements and nature; another is towards challenges presented by the body; and then there is the level of other people, be they relatives, friends or strangers.

With the elements, it can be as simple as bringing an umbrella in case it rains. With physical challenges, it may mean making some practical adjustments to manage and keep on top of them.

Be careful not to pay too much attention to whatever irritates you. You realise that what you tolerate with some people or situations, with others you do not. If you give attention to a small thing, you feel it. But if



you focus on the wider picture, you do not.

Find enjoyment in your experiences. Accept that some are good, some not so good; it is your approach that makes the difference, bringing either

enjoyment or suffering — why choose to suffer?

Dadi Janki taught me that, to really tolerate, I have to be fulfilled, content. When I lack tolerance — and the signs of that are stress, complaining, irrita-

tion, lack of sleep — that means there is something within me that I have to fulfil. If I am content and full, then using the power of tolerance is not only easy, it is so natural that I do not even notice it.

If I am unable to tolerate a person or situation, then there is something in me that I need to work on. I should talk to myself deeply to see what is wrong, what I am missing. And let me try to be content. The more content I am, the more tolerance becomes a natural part of my life.

Dadi Janki described tolerance as an active power; It moves the energy, finds solutions. In contrast, patience is a passive

acceptance of a situation that you cannot alter; best to sit and enjoy it until circumstances change. While patience works alongside tolerance, it is important to discern when you should be patient and accept things, and when you need to act and move them along.

Finally, tolerance brings individuals together in a process of creating unity. This cannot be forced. It is a natural outcome of the inner work you do to change your attitude and awareness.

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