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# **HANDBOOK FOR A BETTER LIFE**

*by TM Williams*

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# INTRODUCTION

Many people believe we are bound, to a significant degree, by our circumstances; that is to say, if we find ourselves in certain life situations we are going to suffer. You can, right now, probably think of a life situation that would cause you to be quite miserable. Perhaps you are in such a situation presently -- something that you consider miserable by its very nature.

I believe that emotional suffering can always be made better. I don't mean in saying this to be dismissive of hardships. I have personal experience with various trying life circumstances, and sympathy for those in trying life circumstances that I have not experienced. But this experience and sympathy doesn't change my thinking about emotional suffering.

Emotional suffering is not mandatory or inevitable IF we are willing to put forth a certain amount of effort, in an intelligent way. It is my hope, and also my belief, that this ebook will clearly demonstrate how to apply particular effort in an intelligent way and in the process to alleviate, or end outright, experiences of emotional suffering.

Will this ebook show you how to never be sad, or disappointed, or angry, or whatever else, ever again? Certainly not. Emotions are part of the life experience. There is a difference however between experiencing an emotion and becoming overwhelmed by it. Experiencing emotion is part of life; being overwhelmed by an emotional experience is a description of suffering.

This work is a composition, and it combines different methods with a single aim in mind -- to make life better, no matter what our circumstances may be. Different methods work to alleviate suffering. While I'm confident about the effectiveness of the methods I will discuss within this ebook, I don't call them the only way to make life better. I encourage the reader to use what they think works best, with respect to the methods I will discuss here and any life improvement methods beyond this.

It's easy to claim something or other will change our lives for the better, isn't it? Rather than just state that this ebook will improve your life I will issue this challenge: prove me wrong. Read this manual in its entirety and legitimately implement some, or all, of what's offered here. See for yourself whether this stuff works, or not. Since you're reading a manual for improving life, it's assumed you actually do want your life to be better than it is. That should be all the

motivation you'll need to put in some effort and put what you learn here to the test (it won't take a great deal of effort and the effort should feel rewarding, particularly as you stay with it).

I don't for a moment claim that the methods offered in this manual for better living originate from me. I do, at times, put my own slant on things but the methods offered absolutely have their own history. So if you should read something and think to yourself that you've heard of it before, I don't disagree with you. For the record I don't at all consider this to be plagiarism; I consider it recommending what has been proven to work. More than this, there really is not much new under the sun. Find any help method you can and you'll find that the method's roots, if not its entirety, date back much further than its current representation.

What works for life improvement works, and it has typically worked for a long time. Someone, or something, somewhere knew that we'd need help navigating the life experience and provided this help, and the help has been passed down the line. If within this ebook I'm continuing a process of passing along valuable help then I say good.

Some of you may notice that I refer to God on different occasions in this ebook. These are not meant as religious references, or to

advocate one religion over another, or to advocate religion at all. I do not advocate any religion and do not oppose anyone engaging in religious worship, or choosing not to do this. I say let people believe as they choose, and to behave accordingly.

So, are you ready to put my claim for life improvement, no matter what your present circumstances are, to the test?

Then let's get started...

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# WATCHING THE STREAM

I want to share a story with you, and I'd like you to consider it carefully.

Two men in ancient China were standing along the edge of a particularly turbulent stream, watching. A variety of things moved down the stream: choppy waves, reeds and other sorts of vegetation, debris, stones, fish and other water life.

The first man maintained his standing place and watched the stream, and everything within it, move past. The second man, however, became so engaged with the stream that he jumped in. He was instantly soaked, and the stream tide carried him off.

This story is fundamental to being at peace, no matter what external circumstances may be. I'll explain why shortly.

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# WHY EMOTIONAL PAIN HAPPENS

Most of us believe emotional pain and suffering happens in the following way:

- Some worldly event happens, or doesn't happen.
- We emotionally hurt because of this event happening, or not happening.

Let's consider a couple of examples of this.

1. Our romantic partner, very suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere, tells us that they no longer care for us and leaves our life.
2. We are passed over for a promotion at work.

In the first example our emotional hurt comes from some event happening, in this case our partner leaving; in the second example our hurt comes from an event not happening, in this case not receiving a job promotion.

**Wrong.**

In fact the cause of our pain is actually a third factor. Let's now include that third factor in its proper place.

- Some worldly event happens, or doesn't happen.

**- *A story about the worldly event happening, or not happening, comes into our awareness. This story concludes that the event happening, or not happening, is a bad thing. We accept this conclusion as the truth.***

- We emotionally hurt because we accept this conclusion, that something bad has happened, as the truth.

This second step, the accepting of negative judgments as the truth, is always what causes emotional pain and suffering.

Every time.

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## EMOTIONS ALWAYS FOLLOW

If you ever happen to see an emotion walking down the street, look a few feet ahead of it and you will see a thought there.

Emotions always follow thinking. This is certain and it is absolute. Emotions are responses to thinking.

Emotions are smoke, and thinking is the fire. Where there is smoke, there is fire. We may not see the fire at first, but the smoke tells us absolutely that fire is there somewhere.

Where we have an emotional response, there has been a thought. Actually, this isn't fully true. Here's the full truth of it:

Where we have an emotional response there has been a thought -- a mental story -- that we have **accepted as truth**.

Thoughts can be stealth: they can come into our awareness like the softest whisper, and faster than light. They can be quite easy to miss. Emotions, on the other hand, are much bigger and much louder. Emotions are far more difficult to miss than thinking is.

Hurtful emotions are the equivalent of waving flags and they serve to tell us -- absolutely and unequivocally -- that we have accepted a negative mental story as the truth.

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## WHAT IS THE TRUTH... REALLY?

Some people may openly admit to accepting negative mental stories as the truth. They may go on to say however that certain circumstances or events really are bad.

It would be bad to have our beloved romantic partner leave us. It would be bad to be passed over for a promotion that we really wanted.

But is this actually so? Are you certain of it?

In all of the workings of the universe, is it at all possible that our romantic partner leaving will actually, eventually, benefit us? Is this at all possible?

Is it at all possible that being passed over for a promotion will, ultimately, open the door to something even better? Might this be the genuine reality of the situation -- not the tragedy that we've come to accept?

We believe, at the level of the ego, that we know what is happening and what the ramifications are: good or bad. We label, with all the certainty we can muster, something as good or bad and then know that it really is that.

Good. Or bad.

Here's the reality: We do not know how the life experience will ultimately unfold, and so we cannot judge any event with certainty. The most we can certainly say is that we have a belief that this or that is bad or good. A belief, however, is not the same as absolute truth.

You can accept negative mental stories as the truth if you wish -- and suffer in the process -- but you cannot know, absolutely, if these negative mental stories really are truth.

Will you insist that your negative mental stories really are true? Or will you withhold judgment, no matter how events should seem initially?

We will never get entirely clear of our painful emotional states of being, and we will not get to peace no matter what, as long as we insist on judging -- whether it be other people, or life circumstances.

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## RETURNING TO THE STREAM

Return your focus, if you will, to the story of the two men in ancient China watching the stream. This story provides salvation from emotional pain and suffering; it is also our entry into peace, no matter what.

The stream the men watch represents our internal state of being, specifically our thinking and emotions. If we should stand apart and watch this mental stream -- neutrally watch and observe our thinking and emotions, which includes any life stories and any visuals or mental movies; as well as any physical body reactions to thinking and emotion, including muscle tension, clenching, floods of adrenaline, etc. -- the stream will ultimately move along and we will be, essentially, unaffected by it.

If we become immersed in this mental activity -- **if we jump into the stream** -- then we will become immediately soaked and will be carried off by the current... until we return to our awareness and get out of the stream.



No matter what should float down the stream, and some of what floats by **will** make us uncomfortable, if we stand apart from it and watch -- like the man who stood watching and remained dry -- it will eventually move along, and we will stay dry too.

The more we stand apart and watch, the less we will be bothered by whatever should float by -- and the less inclined we will be to jump in.

Watch the stream. Do not judge; do not react. Judging and reacting are jumping in. Ask yourself periodically: Am I standing apart from the stream and watching it? Have I jumped in?

It will happen... we will jump in at times. It's all right. Get out of the stream, and go back to watching. You'll dry off in time; but you must first get out. If you remain in the stream you will stay wet and will be swept further and further away by the current.

Get out, and go back to watching.

Watch the stream. Don't jump in. This is your basic blueprint for ending emotional pain and suffering of any and all kinds -- depression, anxiety, stress, anger, despair, fear, worry, and whatever

else -- and also for being at peace no matter what the external world should, or shouldn't, do.

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