

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

www.ChooseHappiness.net

Option as Therapy

From

Monday Night Study Group, 1973

Bruce Di Marsico

Outline

- Understanding more about the Option Method is not necessary
- The core understanding is that our emotional states come from our beliefs, and that we use unhappiness to motivate ourselves.
- Knowing the core understanding better doesn't require knowing more details, but being more convinced of it.
- Other people don't need to know about the Option Method.
- When communicating the Option Method, the biggest danger is for it to be understood as another "way you should be."
- The Option Method is a process for becoming happier without reservations.
- The Option Method does not help people achieve states of mind or forms of behavior.
- Therapies that seek to change states of mind or forms of behavior yield fragile happiness.
- The Option Method is not about fitting people into society.

Introduction

In this talk, Bruce Di Marsico gives guidance for applying the Option Method.

First, he explains that understanding more about the Option Method is not necessary. The core understanding is that our emotional states come from our beliefs, and that we use unhappiness to motivate ourselves. Knowing the core understanding better doesn't require knowing more details, but being more convinced of it. The simple truth known, whole-bodily and perfectly, is more useful than all the details known as abstractions.

Other people don't need to know about the Option Method, since your happiness does not depend on anyone else's happiness. When communicating the Option Method, the biggest danger is for it to be understood as another "way you should be."

The Option Method is a process for becoming happier without reservations. This makes it different from, for example, money, which is a way of becoming happier based on getting what you want. The Option Method does not help people achieve states of mind or forms of behavior-- therapies that seek to change states of mind or forms of behavior yield fragile happiness. The Option Method is not about fitting people into society.

READINGS

Understanding more about the Option Method is not necessary

I want to say something about learning. Some of you may have the impression that when I'm giving what you might call a "lecture", that's in order to help you learn better. It isn't. You may learn more about certain aspects of things as result of what I'm saying. But I'm not sure it has got to do with learning better.

I was speaking to someone who felt that she was getting very confused, especially when things started to get very logical and orderly, like outlines and step-by-step descriptions. She believed that was suppose to help her to understand better and it didn't, because she got confused.

But she understood the concepts of what we are talking about as best she could possibly understand. And the simplest understanding is the best understanding. We talked about all the other aspects of Option, but that doesn't mean we're understanding it better. We are understanding more things about it.

We have discussed that our emotional states come from our beliefs, and that we use unhappiness to motivate ourselves. Some of us just simply know that, and we use the rest of the talking about it to confuse ourselves. If you know it, you know it, and to think that you didn't get all the rest of the elaboration implies some kind of a defect in what you're knowing is not true. If you came away just being more convinced or more aware that beliefs cause unhappiness, that unhappiness does not happen to us a result of our environment, then you understand better without understanding anything more.

Some people, because of their beliefs, believe that the more sides they see to a thing the better they know it. It's an illusion but nonetheless it helps them. Learning is beginning to know that there is nothing more that needs to be said about something. And we may continue to talk.

Some of you want to look at things from all sides; over it and under it and inside and outside of it, perhaps the motive being to help describe it to others or to defend it, or even to defend it to yourself in times of doubt. There are many people who feel that is useful, but it shouldn't be seen as somehow adding to the original information. It can't, if the original information is clear in your mind: our unhappiness comes from our beliefs and not from the environment, not from what happens to us. What better can be said about it than that? What clearer thing could be said? All the intricacies and all the details are not to help you better understand it, if you already understand it. But for those of you who feel that it helps out to know more aspects of it, for whatever purposes they want to use it, fine.

If you don't know the truth of unhappiness, then these details might be ways to help you to begin to know it, but for those of you who know it, you shouldn't feel that you have to know more than that. If you understand the basic concept, you've truly got all you really need to have.

What would probably help us to know anything better, is to be happier.

The only times that you don't know that you are using unhappiness as a motivation is when you are using it as a motivation. And the only times that you don't know that unhappiness is a result of beliefs is when your unhappiness is a result of your beliefs.

The implications of the truth of unhappiness you could derive on your own, from your own experiences, in your own ways.

Communicating the truth of happiness

Questioner: I'm concerned about how to get Option across to other people.

The way I'm explaining it is my style when I explain it to others. It might not be suitable for you at all as a way you can explain it to others.

Ask yourself, why do you need to explain it to others? Start off with freedom: I don't have to explain it to others, and they don't have to know what I know.

I've stopped explaining Option just about everywhere except here. People say to me, what is it all about? And I say "you got a couple of days?" What it amounts to is that I don't know how nor am I willing to really explain it in just a few minutes, because I find that most any time I try to explain it, I'm more mis-explaining it than anything.

I try to use examples and I find the best it does is to get them to think. It doesn't prove anything.

This is an example of the four kind of emotional responses to one single event: a girl's going off to college and standing on her front stoop with her family, her mother, and her father, and her sister and there is a man passing by. She's going away to college, that's the only single real objective event. Her mother is feeling very sad about it, her sister is very happy about it. Her father is kind of mixed about it. And the man walking down the block doesn't think anything about it. Each one according to their beliefs are feeling what they're feeling.

The mother is only seeing it as a loss of a daughter. She can't understand why she's got to away to school. Why can't she go to a college in town and live at home, and so on. And she only sees the loss for herself, so she only sees that it is unhappy experience. So she's unhappy. The father sees it as kind of good for his daughter to grow up and be away with her friends and at school and to get away from home. That's good but he's also going to miss his little girl so, he sees it as

both good and bad, and feels accordingly. And the little sister is just absolutely overjoyed that that brat is going away to school, she's going to have the phone to herself, and the room all to herself, and mother and father all to herself. So she's only seeing it as good and she feels good about it. She's really happy. And the man walking down the street doesn't think it is good or bad or anything. He doesn't even think about it much, so he doesn't feel anything about it.

I like to use that as an example. Do you think it really proves anything to anybody who doesn't want proof?

That really helps people to start thinking. But usually their way of thinking is to immediately make objections from their fears. So then if you're interested in getting involved with their fears and actually doing therapy with them right then and right there, there is no such thing as an explanation. The only explanation is that you really going to get involved with therapy.

Some people will grab it easily and their fears won't stand on their way. Perhaps it threatens all of us to some extent. And I think many of us still use it to threaten ourselves, by saying that we should be happy. I think that's the biggest misunderstanding that most people hear. They know everything I am saying but they immediately can go away right through it and say, "you mean you are not supposed to be unhappy about anything? You shouldn't be unhappy?" They seem to have intuition that's it's all very true, but they are frightened of the implication, which, in their fear, they take to be that they *shouldn't* be unhappy.

Everyone of you to one degree or another says to yourselves "I shouldn't be unhappy." And so we still use the possibility of happiness to threaten ourselves. One of the easiest things, one of the best things to say if you are explaining Option is just that, even if they are not saying it, you say "it doesn't mean that one shouldn't be unhappy." That becomes a very important first statement to me. Because the whole system can be heard as another "should."

Defining the Option Method

Option Method is a process or a method for becoming happier. Now, that definition has got a leak in it, because in a sense making money is a process for becoming happier, some would say. So let me add, a method for becoming happier in every way and in any way without reservations, without drawbacks. It's a method of becoming happier anytime we need to become happier under any circumstances, in any situation.

It's not a way of controlling others. It's not a way of "helping" others to achieve states of mind or forms of behaviors which we have judged to be better than others. It's not a process by which people learn to function better according to some ideals. It is not to prevent thieves from stealing or murderers from murdering, or lovers from loving. The Option Method is not to help students to learn better, or workers to work better, or fighters to fight better. It's to help us to be happier. Although some of the above may happen, it is not because that they were a desired goal of ours but perhaps they were a product of becoming happier. So, students may learn better or workers work better, or fighters may not fight anymore, or they may fight better or thieves may stop stealing or they may steal better. Any of the changes might be a function of their becoming happier, but those things are not our goal. Our goal is to help a person to be happier.

Not to be happier in order to function better. Not to be happier in order to change their form of behavior, not to be happier in order to anything. They may ask you about that. They may think they want that. But the Option Method is to help them to be happy.

To the best of my knowledge, no other therapy or system defines its goals this way, simply to help people to be happier. Changing behavior seems to happen, true. But the Option Method is not to help people to become happier *in order* to change their behavior; it is to help them become *happy*. As they become happier

they invariably will change their behavior. But the goal is not to stop thieves from stealing. Maybe a happy person would not steal, but who we are to say? We're not going to judge any behavior. Behavior definitely changes, but in a way that people want for themselves, and we cannot predict. We're not knowing better, what people should do.

Now, many people seek out the other methods and sciences with the implicit hope of achieving more happiness, although explicitly stated they really strive for other goals. Some strive for awareness, integration, normalcy, etcetera, hoping to be more happy as a product of this. A person may go into therapy hoping that if they get well-adjusted that therefore they will be happier. That if they are better integrated they will be happier. But if they are seeking these things primarily as a way of being happy, that in my mind is not much different than seeking money is a way of being happy, another tool, of which happiness is sometimes the by-product.

Almost every therapy, every religion that I know, and certainly in the way it's presented, has the point of view that happiness is by-product of doing this or that, of thinking a certain way. Many even state axiomatically "without a doubt there will always be unhappiness in life." So therefore their goal is to help one cope, or face unhappiness realistically, adjust or function in spite of it, or function well with it. "Since there is going to be unhappiness in life, therefore we propose this system to help you through it." Their belief in the permanence of unhappiness is so unequivocal that they often have a pervasive despair and a built-in support for the belief that we are victims - victims to our environment and to our past, and something like that, and the idea is to lessen this victimization. These therapies help people to be happy in much the same way as giving money to somebody unhappy about the lack of it helps that person to be happy.

Removing what makes one unhappy, be it hunger or fear, certainly makes one happy. But if in doing so, the belief in value of unhappiness is the motivation that's used, one's happiness is delicate, and conditional on the environment.

We're always happy because of this or that, and it is dependent on this going right and that going right. Unhappiness will be used again each time one faces difficulty.

I'd like to give you an example from traditional psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis, a patient sees the "reason," that he feels unhappy in a certain way. They see how they began to be unhappy in a certain way in their childhood and then they see that they are no longer really in that situation and they needn't feel the same way as they did in childhood. For example, that a man needn't feel about all women what he felt about his mother. And once he sees that he needn't feel all women what he felt about his mother, then he has a good reason to stop feeling that way about all women.

And the real issue of unhappiness has not been touched. At its limited best, real good psychoanalysis amounts to something like this: since you can now see that what you feared was a castrating mother you projected this characteristic on all women. In order to better protect yourself in your relationship with them, you can now also see that you don't have to do this in order to avoid castrating women. Now, that you see the cause of it, you don't have to project your fear of castrating women on to all women in order to avoid women that are really castrating.

My point is that there is no question of not fearing castrating, that's not a question. That one shouldn't fear castration or needn't fear castration or even if there is such a thing as castrating female, is not the question.

What is implied and even stated is that not all women are castrating, but only some. That hopefully is the more "realistic" approach to life that psychoanalysis would help you gain. Without your neurosis, you can more properly assess who is who. Now you'll only feel fear of really dangerous women, not women that you'd imagine to be dangerous. Again, but there is no question about that there are of course some dangerous women and there are really castrating females.

There are many preconceived notions in the process of psychoanalysis, such as what healthy heterosexual relationships are, and what's in it for each sex, and they are all predefined for the person undergoing analysis by the system: what's better, what's bad. What I just stated is an example. It's not a true representation of all psychoanalysis, it's not intended to be. What many other people propose as psychoanalysis is even more obnoxious.

I like the old Greek meaning of the word *therapon*, which is where we get the modern word therapist we get from that. The ancient Greek meaning is a comrade in a common struggle. In the Option Method, a therapist is more like that original Greek meaning, it's to be with a client help him or her to be with themselves.

A serviceable definition of a therapist for us might be helping those who want me to help them to be happier, not to need help to be happier.

Helping those who want me to help them to be happier, not to need help to be happier.

Now when you come to me as your therapist, and you ask me to help you to be happier, I want to help you to not to need help to be happier.

The whole idea of mental illness is just unpopular behavior, that's what it means. It's a political designation, and always has been -- psychiatrists and all who propose ideal behaviors into being a policeman for a higher utopia, to shape people up them up, in a grander scheme to have them be normal and adjusted.

The Option Method is not about fitting people into a society. We're not concerned with that. Go see a society-fitter.

Questions for Reflection

How would you summarize the core understanding of the Option Method in a few sentences?

How profoundly are you convinced of this core understanding?

Do you believe you need to know many details about the Option Method in order to be happier?

Do you communicate the Option Method to others?

Why?

What are some of the ways of being, forms of behavior, or states of mind you have believed in the past you needed in order to be happy?

Meditation for the Week

- You don't need to know a lot about unhappiness and happiness in order to be happy.