



Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

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A Culture of Worry

“Fear is the interest paid on a debt you don’t owe.” ----- my fortune cookie this week at the local Asian restaurant

There’s always something. No matter how much peace or freedom we may experience in our lives, it seems there’s always something to worry about. And as our lives become more complex, chaotic, and unpredictable, even more possibilities emerge as candidates for our worry. For most, this list of ‘somethings’ is long. The energy consumed on worry, therefore, can be a considerable fraction of the energy available in a given day. I don’t profess a cure for what has most certainly become “a culture of worry,” but I do invite you to consider a new *relationship* with your worries, one that can dramatically reduce the energy drain so commonly experienced. As always, it involves new ways of seeing and thinking.

Worry comes from fear, usually in the form of “fear of perceived negative consequences of things.” Test this out for yourself right now. *Name* something you worry about. Now see if you can *name* the perceived consequences that give rise to the worry. It probably looks like this: “I worry about ‘x’ because I’m afraid ‘y’ will happen.” Here are two different, and perhaps new, ways of seeing your worry with new eyes:

- Examine the *evidence* you have for “y” actually occurring. In fact, there *is* none – because “y” lives in the future, which hasn’t happened; and *evidence* lives in the past, which is already behind you, even if only by 30 seconds.
- Examine the *thought* you have about “perceived negative consequences.” If you believe, as do I, that you are free to choose your thoughts, you’re forced to accept you’re choosing negative ones. (If you *don’t* believe you choose your thoughts, you might ask who’s choosing them for you; but that’s another topic altogether.)

While both these approaches may strike you as idealistic, especially if you’re attached to your worry, they are simply the product of conscious thinking. Herein lies the problem. We *believe* our worrying comes from *rational* thought, but we haven’t stopped for long enough for any rational thought to occur. Worry comes from **unconscious** thoughts; those are programmed responses from the past, responses that “do our thinking for us,” so much so that we may deny this statement as being true. Unconscious, programmed thoughts are actually held in place by **not** thinking. You can’t fight off unconscious thinking; it’s running 24/7. You can, however, replace it with conscious thinking; and you get there by becoming aware of your thoughts.

The practice of awareness – stopping for long enough to consciously notice your thinking – is, at the same time, *both* the most powerful single action you can take toward a life of peace & freedom (eliminating worry in the process), *and* the most difficult idea of all for readers and clients to accept. Why? Our external world wants us **not** to think, because we go along with obsessive consumerism and herd mentality more easily if we don’t. Our unconscious mind wants us **not** to think, too, because it sees new possibility as a threat to our safety. Yet when we listen to those voices, we then complain that life is a struggle, fraught with worry and containing little possibility.

If life is a struggle, *life* is not the problem. *Lack of thinking* is the problem. It takes courage and practice to think for yourself. Yet the rewards are phenomenal, and include peace, freedom from worry, and limitless possibility. You find those things not from winning the lottery, but from clarity and perspective ... new ways of seeing and thinking.

Exercise: Get to know your worries: You can prove all this to yourself; do this exercise a few times each day for a month. It takes less than two minutes each time. Stop what you are doing. *Name* your most pressing worry. Now *name* the perceived negative consequences your programmed thinking tells you to be so. Then name the *evidence* you have for the truth of that thought. Now, imagine the situation turns out amazingly well instead. Then name the *evidence* you have for *that*. Because neither thought has any evidence, you’re left with what kind of thinking you choose. If you need to, name a really good reason why you’d choose negative thoughts when you could choose thoughts that made you feel more empowered instead. After a month, notice what’s different in both your thinking and your worrying. Just notice.

A River Runs Through It [Life lessons offered by nature]

Unlike us, nature doesn't have to re-learn how to think. In fact, she never forgot how. She lives her purpose, naturally and without effort or worry. For example, rivers meander all over their flood plains, continually changing course as they find the easiest path to the sea. It's a process that derives from purpose and intention (what it means to be a river) and not from worry about what comes next.

Imagine for a moment, if you can, a river in a state of worry. It might just **stop** flowing, held by the thought that its next choice could lead to danger. "Oh shit. If I meander to the west, those rocks could dam my flow. And if I meander to the east, that other nasty river might consume me. I don't know what to do next." No, rivers "get it" in another way. Meandering is what they do. They can't *not* meander; it's simply part of the process of creativity that makes a river a river. In any one moment, rivers have an infinite number of choices. By allowing creative intention alone to guide them, they never become stuck. Being stuck means seeing only one choice, when in fact, many exist.

Openings to New Possibility

Reaching Your Life's Greatest Potential: Consistent with many of my monthly articles, you may notice that exploring the edges of your own world – worries, unknowns, fears, hidden assumptions – is not something you can do very well alone. Like so many other adventures into the wilderness of our own uncharted territory, it helps to have a guide, one with a map and experience of the landscape, to make your own self-reflection and inquiry more meaningful and productive. After pondering this month's article, and perhaps seeing my new website, you might consider a coaching program for yourself, an investment in reaching your life's greatest potential. There's no cost or obligation to you for an exploratory conversation. Contact me, and begin to shift forever your view of what's possible. Perhaps the only block is one of your "thoughts."

New Website: Check out my redesigned website, www.RoadNotTaken.com. You'll notice that you can now gain access to more articles, blogs, and newsletters, so you'll find "new stuff" on a regular basis. This newsletter will now also be found as a blog entry (under the category Purposeful Wanderings). Several back issues are also posted there. I'm creating a video that will be posted on the site as well.

Book of the month – Courageous Dreaming, by Alberto Villoldo. Subtitled "How Shamans Dream the World into Being," this book might be a good accompaniment to this month's article. It offers beautifully written perspective and insight into the power of our own consciousness to create the world we want to experience. Each of us has levels of consciousness far deeper than the level required to get through an ordinary day, but if we experience only the ordinary, we never tap these more powerful levels. In them, however, is the key to creating any world we can imagine. Given the unconscious slumber our world is in, it's easy to reject his ideas. But that just ensures the slumber continues. As always, life is a choice, and it's a choice based in the power of thought – to dream the world into being.

Contact me – for details, with questions or comments, or for a "conversation for possibility" about a life you'd love.

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