WHY DIG IN THE DARKNESS:
The Mind-Blowing Damage of Denial

When you get right down to it, suffering doesn’t come *to* us, it comes *through* us. It originates from the depths of our beings, from our destructiveness. What happens is that we all become busy little bees, trying to figure out how to avoid, reduce or eliminate our suffering. But since we are presently chained to this world of duality, our typical methods don't work.

For in our minds eye we see two forces that oppose each other. One is good, or constructive, and the other is bad, or destructive. And right there, in the moment we get trapped in this system of dualistic thinking, we lose any possibility of solving our problem. And of course our problem, we think, is whatever is causing us to suffer.

The bigger problems lies in the way we automatically begin to shield ourselves from actually seeing whatever is destructive within us. We deny. We avoid. We repress. We lie to ourselves and others. We do whatever it takes to not see there is a root cause for our suffering, and it’s in us.

Because we are unaware of our own destructiveness, we can’t see how it is connected to what is showing up in our lives. As such, we act out our inner negativity so that it comes out sideways, which leads to very damaging results.

Then our feelings of guilt start to snowball as we watch chaos and destruction swirl around us. Ironically, this was exactly what we were hoping to avoid by pretending that if we don’t look at the source of our problems, our problems will go away!

The result? We become split within ourselves. We end up rejecting and cutting off parts of ourselves that are, in fact, a source of potent, creative energy. And without having access to all our essence, we can’t be whole.

Whenever we do this—when we dim our awareness as a way to repress undesirable parts of ourselves—we make ourselves more weak, more confused, and ultimately unable to solve this painful riddle of why we suffer so.

All the teachings from the Guide are primarily focused on helping us find and face these cut off parts so we can come out of our self-imposed blindness.

Surprisingly, what we’re about to discover is that if we’re willing to confront ourselves, doing so will not bring devastation down upon our heads, as we fear. No, this is actually the way we must go to wake up the vital energy we’ve lost access to, and which we need to become fully integrated people.

**TWO COMMON THEORIES ABOUT EVIL (Spoiler: Both are Wrong)**

Too often, religions have taken up the dualistic approach of presenting evil as the antithesis of the forces of goodness. (Note, we can use the word evil, darkness, destructiveness or negativity; they are all the same thing.) When they do this, they are reinforcing our fear of ourselves as well as our guilt, opening even wider the chasm inside our souls, rather than helping us to close and heal it.

These energies of fear and guilt are then used to attempt to force us to be good. The unintended consequence of this is the creation of more blindness. Compulsions set in along with self-perpetuating patterns that eventually spiral us downward into a pit of negative results.

On the other hand, there are those pitching the idea that evil simply does not exist. It’s an illusion! This philosophy is about as correct as its religious opposite. In the case of religions, they do recognize the danger of being destructive and the suffering that results, but they lead us down a path of wanting to destroy evil, or at a minimum whisk it away. As if anything that exists in the universe can be made to disappear.

In the alternative philosophy, the notion that evil is an illusion is true in the sense that there is fundamentally only one great creative power. And once we’ve transcended duality, we’ll get a taste of this unitive consciousness in which all is one. Until then, such a perspective leads to repression.

For if we deny the reality of evil in this dimension we will wind up in a pond of wishful thinking. Our blindness will increase and we will be less in touch with our whole selves, *decreasing* our level of awareness rather than *increasing* it.

As so often happens, these two opposing beliefs each express a great truth, but their narrow understanding of things renders both of them untrue.

**THE RIGHT APPROACH TO EVIL**

When we begin to wade into the healing waters of self-exploration, we typically start to feel very uncomfortable just at the point when we’re confronted with some of our less desirable qualities. The deeper meaning of our anxious feelings can be plainly stated as: “Such-and-such should not exist in me!”

We have, in fact, spent the better part of our lives painstakingly erecting defenses designed to protect us, somewhat from the destructiveness of others, but even more so from our own darkness. If we look closely at our anxiety, we’ll discover this is true. Regardless of how threatening someone else may be, and no matter how frightening an outer event might appear to us, in the final analysis we are the ones we are so apprehensive about.

We need to consider how we habitually run away from whatever is going on inside. This is the breeding ground for our emotional illnesses, for our troubles, and therefore for our suffering. We need to catch wind of the fearful inner voice that says, “I shouldn’t be this way.” For if we ignore any fear, it grows.

The next hurdle we must face and tackle is this: How do we cope with this undesirable material once we spot it?

Meditation is going to be an essential element. Why? Because without access to the greater mind, our little mind will be unable to bring about change. For one thing, we’re going to need to straighten out some of our faulty mental ideas, aligning ourselves with the greater truth. Otherwise, our false concepts will create a block.

For example, some of us have the mistaken belief that the greater intelligence inside us is a magician that can make our inner destructiveness vanish. If that’s what we think, we are in for a rude awakening. In truth, the result of such a misguided view is that our requests for help will seemingly go unanswered. But the real problem we are stumbling over is our misunderstanding about how life works.

Our goal then is to know and accept the darkness that lurks within us. But let’s pay close attention to this word “acceptance” and how we should come at it. For only by accepting in the right way can the force that has gone awry—the good that has been contorted into evil—be transformed.

To accept does not mean to condone. We must learn to evaluate our undesirable impulses with a realistic eye. We want to avoid the pitfall of, on the one hand, projecting them onto others or justifying and exonerating ourselves with our self-righteousness, while on the other hand indulging our little selves, denying our unfavorable qualities, and avoiding seeing ourselves in truth.

When we accept undesirable parts, we fully acknowledge them without finding excuses or blaming someone else. At the same time, we don’t fall into feeling hopeless and self-rejecting.

This is a tall order. But if we make a sincere effort and pray for assistance, guidance will come.

**THE RETURN TO WHOLENESS**

Most of us have forgotten this simple truth: The worst in us was originally the best in us. Our destructiveness actually holds highly desirable creative power and we need to return it to its essential goodness. Once we realize this, we will be able to cope with all the parts of ourselves, even those we don’t currently like.

Most people, with very, very few exceptions, are coping with a small fraction of their total personality. We only want to know—and are willing to accept—a small part of ourselves. What a terrible loss! For when we shut off what’s undesirable, we are also not aware of parts that are already free and clear, pure and good.

In the end, we pay an enormous price for not accepting the destructiveness that dwells within, which is way higher than the price of looking at the negativity that’s there.

We’re going to have to grope in the dark, wading through our confusion until we find a way to accept our evil impulses without condoning them. We’ll want to understand them, yet not identify with them. Such understanding will require that we keep tapping into the higher forces within us for inspiration, deliberately asking for help in waking up and handling what we find.

Any time we find ourselves in an unpleasant mood, in a threatening situation, or confused and surrounded by darkness, we can be sure there’s an inner problem brewing, regardless of what’s happening around us.

Admitting that we’re afraid to see what it’s about and that we’d rather keep burying our head in the sand will actually bring immediate relief. At least now we’re in truth and seeing a bit more of what’s going on. Now we’re getting somewhere. Such an approach deflates these negative powers instantly.

Keep in mind, we want to learn what steps we can take to incorporate the power in a positive way, rather than continue to try to shut it off.

So what’s the first step? We need to apply a new theory: Evil, or destructiveness, is not a separate final force. No matter how distasteful some of our attributes are—whether they be cruelty, spite, arrogance, contempt, selfishness, indifference, greed, cheating or something else—we must start to see that these traits are actually strong energy currents that were originally good. They still hold the potential for creating beauty and making life better.

It’s when we stop negating our ugliness that we will no longer have to deny our beauty. And there is so much beauty in us that’s already free! We actually have all this beauty that we ignore.

We can pray to see our beauty, while at the same time we’re praying to see the ugly. When we can perceive both, we’ll have made a giant leap toward integrating what is currently pulling us under.

And when we can see both the beauty and the ugliness in ourselves, we’ll start to see both sides in others. Until then, we’ll keep rejecting people when we perceive their darkness, just we are rejecting the ugly parts of ourselves. Either that or we will only see their goodness and we will overlook their destructiveness. It’s only by seeing both that we begin to transcend duality.

**OUR BEST AND OUR WORST ASPECTS ARE ONE**

Our work is to search for how a particular hostile impulse—in us—is actually, underneath all the cruelty, originally a force for good. Such an awareness will take us a long way in turning this world around.

For ugly traits that are currently running in destructive channels, or which have become frozen and stagnant, are powers that can be used however people wish: for good or for ill.

In other words, the exact same power that we are now wielding in the form of hostility, envy, hatred, rage, bitterness, self-pity or blame, holds the creative power to build happiness, pleasure and love, for ourselves and the people around us.

What we need to understand is that whatever we dislike most in ourselves is, at its heart, a highly desirable and very creative power. We don’t like it because in its present form it’s not likable. So we need to first see how we are using our power in undesirable ways, and then remember that the energy behind this manifestation is indeed desirable.

It’s made of the life-stuff itself, and contains both consciousness and creative energy. So if we don’t feel we are creative people, this is because our creative juices have gotten locked away behind a wall of unawareness. Trapped in there with them is every possibility for creating a life that is vibrant and rich. This storehouse contains the best of life, which means it also holds the possibility for the very worst.

But nothing in life is final, for life is always flowing and moving. To be become fixated on what is stuck, as though it’s the end, only creates more error and confusion, blinding us further.

So let’s take a risk and start to see what’s really here now. For it’s by continually looking away and denying the evil within that we do such great harm. In denying parts of ourselves we inactivate an essential aspect, causing it to stagnate. And stagnation causes these energies to putrefy. Matter also putrefies when it stagnates and stops moving. Same for consciousness. Life must move; it’s a continually flowing process.

When life stands still, death walks in. Life in the long run is eternal, so death can only be temporary, which is as true for people as it is for energy. But as long as the energy can’t flow, death takes place and it lasts until the energy is released and allowed to flow again.

So to do the work of self-awareness is to bring ourselves back to life.

**DENIAL TRUMPS DESTRUCTIVENESS**

We’ve mentioned a handful of evil traits such as spite, cruelty, envy, hostility and selfishness, and all of these are truly destructive. And yet, believe it or not, there are three traits that are more responsible for evil than these. They are: pride, self-will and fear.

How, you ask, can these three trump something like, say, hate? The answer is really quite simple. Our overtly negative attitudes are never the real evil. For if we will just acknowledge them, we will remain in the flow. If we squarely and honestly admit to even our greatest hatred, our most spiteful vindictiveness, our worst impulses of cruelty—not irresponsibly acting them out or denying them, but fully accepting them—they will not become harmful.

To whatever degree we see them, face them and admit them, their intensity will diminish and eventually convert over to a flowing state of life-giving energy. Hate will transform into love, cruelty will switch into healthy aggression and self-assertion, and stagnation will revert to pleasure and joy. It’s inevitable.

If we are willing to keep hunting for just the right fusion of self-awareness and self-acceptance, it will become second nature to us. It’s by recognizing evil that we stop acting out evil. Denying evil is the real problem. And pride, self-will and fear are all forms of denial. As such, these three are more dangerous than the evil they deny. For they make healing impossible.

Self-will works by making us so hell-bent on insisting we are right that we become unwilling to accept present-day reality. Due to our self-will, we wish to already be better than we are. But it’s impossible to grow out of something we are too self-willed to admit.

Self-will creates rigidity and being rigid is, like, the opposite of being in the flow. Self-will says, “I don’t accept things the way they are. It has to be my way. I insist.” Such a stance will make it impossible for us to admit the momentary truth, which is that all is not to our liking.

Pride steps up and says, “I don’t want to have such ugliness inside me.” Being in truth, however, requires us to have a healthy inner dose of flexibility and humility. Oh, and courage. We’re going to need to admit that in the moment, we’re not all that great.

Fear tells us that acknowledging and accepting our ugliness will be overwhelming. As such, we deny that there is any reason to have faith in the benign nature of creation. We’re afraid that truthfully admitting to what truly exists right now will mean danger and doom, chaos and annihilation.

The logical extension of this assumption is that the world must be built on deceit and deception. “This place is stacked against me,” we tell ourselves.

Such thoughts sound somewhat senseless, and yet if we dig deep enough, this is what we’ll find lurking in the depths of some of our psyches. Many people unwittingly build their whole lives on this assumption.

What is the truth of the matter?

* If we give up our self-will, we will not lose our freedom or our self-expression.
* If we give up the pride that hides our inner destructiveness, we will not lose our genuine dignity.
* If we abandon our fear of evil, evil will not overwhelm us.

On all accounts, exactly the opposite is what’s true. Our denial, that’s the evil, whereas our willingness to see what’s destructive leads to self-respect and self-liking. This then is what we need to learn.

The more we do, the more joy will unfold in our lives and in our world. We will become the masters of our own fate, not through ego control but by accessing our real capacity to create.

Again, what’s the key? We must learn to encounter the destructive forces within so we can take back our lives, returning the life-energy at our disposal to its original abundant nature. When we do this, we will incorporate our best parts into our whole being.

**WHAT’S THE WAY OUT?**

Let’s say we have a tendency to overspend. We know it’s wrong, but hey, we enjoy it! But then we feel guilty. So we try to pretend it didn’t happen, justifying and rationalizing our behavior.

Whenever this happens, we negate everything surrounding this destructive impulse. This puts us in a pickle. We think we either have to give up all the pleasure connected with overspending in order to become decent people who are mature and responsible and safe. Or we are going to keep getting pleasure from this negative trait, but at the tremendous cost of feeling insecure, guilty and fearful that we really aren’t capable of running our own life.

What we need to uncover is that behind our compulsion to overspend and be irresponsible is a legitimate yearning for pleasure. We want to expand and have new experiences! Once we see that this is what is driving us, our predicament will cease.

We need to find the essence of the underlying wish, without acting out the destructiveness of it. Then it won’t be so hard to activate the wish in a realistic way that doesn’t take us down, in the end.

In the meantime, we’ll need to battle this typical either/or problem: How can we give up being irresponsible if being responsible means we must survive on a narrow margin of pleasure and have no way to express ourselves? Beyond this, since we don’t really want to give up our irresponsibility, how do we deal with our guilt?

How do we contact the vital part of ourselves that rightfully longs for pleasure, but doesn’t yet know how to live fully without either being a parasite or exploiting others?

First, we can work to fully accept that there is a beautiful force in us bursting at the seams to have full pleasure, and it lies just below our irresponsibility. When we find this, we can value it for what it is, giving it expression without infringing on anyone else and without messing up the need for balance in our lives.

For to manage well in life, it’s not necessary to pay this high price of needless worry, anxiety and guilt. This is only what we must pay when we sacrifice having peace of mind for having a short-lived pleasure.

If we can blend in the rightfulness of having self-discipline, we will discover a deeper, longer lasting pleasure that is free from guilt. In fact, it is possible to join desire for pleasure with responsibility and self-discipline, and activate an inner center that says, “Hey, I want to enjoy life. The universe is unlimited in abundance. There’s no limit to what is possible. I can experience marvelous things. I can express myself in beautiful ways. This can be true for me if I can find another way to express myself and attain pleasure that is not self-destructive.”

It is the profound qualities of self-responsibility and self-discipline that make it possible to have more joy and to express ourselves more freely. Without them, we will remain locked in conflict and continue to feel deprived. Our willingness to develop discipline will grow when we know we have every right to use self-discipline for the divine purpose of increasing our pleasure and our self-expression.

If we are feeling hopeless or discouraged, know this: We are caught in illusion and error. We can always pray for help: “Dear [Insert-name-of-whoever-we pray-to], help me see the truth.”

Also know this: Difficult periods are opportunities to see what, until now, we have not yet understood. It’s a time to use our problems as steppingstones, to follow our suffering as though it’s a beacon. For suffering points to where to dig within our darkness, and this is the way we must go to bring more light.

Receive the love and blessings of this teaching, friends, and be in peace.