

Transforming Fear ©
By Steve Reedy

Human beings are essentially highly intelligent animals capable of developing abstract thought after being housebroken. Although we conceive and reproduce as an animal does in nature, we have evolved so far beyond nature that we can only survive in our captivity. The term “captivity” is used to describe animals in a zoo or a place where a person’s ability to move or act freely is limited or removed completely. In an effort to avoid the negative connotations coinciding with the term “captivity”, we have defined our separation from nature as “civilization”... and we call ourselves “civilians”. This looks more inviting on a tourist brochure and allows us to feel better when we wake up in the morning. This “civilization”, or free roaming human zoo as I like to call it, is basically a captive society in an advanced state of social development, with complex legal, political, and religious organizations that guide its evolution or stagnation. And, as captives, we are given a choice, we either acclimate ourselves to the civilization we’re born into, or risk being cast out as barbarians. The modern definition of “barbarian” suggests someone who is, primitive, uneducated, or has a tendency for hitting various members of their social group with large sticks. “Barbarian”, was originally a Greek word meaning someone who was “non-Greek”. This meant that anyone who wasn’t Greek was considered a barbarian... which created a form of prejudiced nationalism. This term was also used throughout the Bible to mean the same thing... though modern translations have adopted the “savage” definition instead of the Greek origin. Either use of the word identifies a separation between civilizations based on differences... whether they speak a different language or throw pointed sticks at one another.

My point in all of this is that we are essentially a group of captive people subscribing to our civilization’s various social, economic, and religious belief systems to avoid being labeled as a barbarian, or unsupportive of the various illusions we inherit from our family, community, city, state, and country. Now, don’t get me wrong, I understand the need for social organization. Socialization provides a means to create a sense of unity with others and insures our survival. I’m all for that. My question is not how to undo socialization or how to end nationalism. Applied correctly, both can propel the human race to levels of peace, creativity, and cohabitation it never dreamed of. It has just been my observation that our society has become stagnant and we may need to reevaluate a few things before we continue. And, as I said before, any form of social change or evolution must begin as an inward journey. Like animals in nature, we are born perfect; it is only a difference in perception that creates barbarians. Change your perception, and you change the world.

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When I first began to flesh out my thoughts on the evolution of personal human belief systems, and how they can contribute to the underlying current of fear in our society, I looked at our lives as if they were built on a foundation... as one would build a house. This is a very common view. We are told that it is our job as “adults” to build a life fit

for our society while upholding its traditions and adhering to its laws while contributing to its overall survival and sense of nationalism. The most popular blueprint for building a suburbanite white male when I was growing up in the 1980s went something like this: go to school, get good grades, go to church, go to college, get a diploma, get a job, get married, have kids, get a promotion, get a house, raise a family, retire, and die. Oddly enough, this is the exact goal of Milton Bradley's board game called, "LIFE" where the player who retires with the most money wins... they leave off the death part to keep it suitable for children. Plus the tag line, "he who dies with the most money, wins" doesn't leave the player with those anticipated retirement years to spend time with his grandchildren while having open heart surgery.

The construction of our life begins shortly after we stop spitting up on ourselves and chewing on our own feet. Various social groups and institutions create our foundation by laying it firmly in family, religion, nationalism, and anything else they believe will make us a productive civilian. It is the hope of these social groups that we will build our lives based on their belief systems... then pass these beliefs and traditions on to future generations, while allowing the older generation to remain rooted in their own convictions. Some beliefs stick... some don't. When enough stick, we begin to form an individualistic understanding of the world unequal to any other.

Now, it should be noted that the beliefs creating our foundation are not necessarily based on knowledge... they are simply expressions of individual or collective ideology based on opinions and expectations. This "ideology" can lose its influence when met with knowledge and experience outside the particular belief that supports it. So, those supporting a particular belief system will attempt to divert us from unsupportive knowledge by introducing us to what they consider to be "good" and "bad" by using punishment when deviation occurs. Punishment is usually some type of negative reinforcement designed to instill the basics of good conduct to prevent us from screaming naked through the house in front of company. While the basics of good conduct are more for domestication purposes, the more abstract beliefs like, "don't talk to those people, they're evil," require more abstract punishments such as the wrath of a god. When we are too old for basic punishments... abstract punishments are applied to the basic rules of conduct... with the introduction of state and government intervention when we really get out of line. Beliefs, both basic and abstract, create a sense of separation from those we see as different from us, or as I said earlier, "barbarians". To set this sense of separation deep in our foundation, we are led to believe that anything beyond, or opposing, our belief system is misguided, ignorant, bad, or evil... therefore we consider ourselves to be misguided, ignorant, bad or evil if we act or think differently than those who are teaching us. As all positive and negative emotions are learned, this belief introduces unwarranted fear into the foundation we build our life on. This fear can become the underlying current of our life.

So, thanks to the barrage of people giving us their opinion on how we should live, we have a foundation on which we can construct the framework of our life. There are several theories on childhood development that give a good representation of what happens between the time we learn to walk and the time we walk out the door. Urie

Bronfenbrenner's child developmental theory sees a child as "developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings to broad cultural values, laws, and customs." Each system contains roles, norms and rules that can shape our development. He states that we are born with neither negative or positive tendencies and that our development is not universal. One of the more important aspects of Bronfenbrenner's theory is that all relationships are reciprocal. In other words, "adults affect children's responses, but children's biologically and socially determined characteristics also influence the behavior of adults." This implies that any deviation from a belief system could create doubt in the generation before or behind us. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory suggests that around the age of twelve we began defining our own concepts of right and wrong based on self-chosen ethical principles that reflect the beliefs set in our childhood foundation. Jean Piaget suggests that during this age we begin wrapping up our cognitive development while creating ideas based on abstract thought. This means that all the social and moral issues we've collected from Bronfenbrenner's complex systems must somehow come together in the hope of creating a stable identity before entering adulthood while adhering to the belief systems we've chosen to follow. Erik Erikson describes this as the identity crisis stage, or stage five in his eight stages of human development. He concludes that, if we do not establish an identity based on social norms during this stage, we may be confused as adults about the roles we should be playing. This implies that anything outside the "norm" creates confusion. And, of course, Sigmund Freud suggests that all we're really thinking about during this particular stage in life is sex.

By the look of it, at around age twelve, our mind begins sorting itself out so we can enter a state of maturity. Biologically, this is a natural progression of our thought process and should be a time of deep contemplation and meditation. Well, we all remember what it's like to be twelve years old; civilization manipulates and cashes in on our consumption in-between teaching us generalized trivia for standardized equivalency tests and restricting us from engaging in early sexual activity or other "delinquent" behaviors. At one of the most crucial and difficult biological and psychological developmental periods of our lives, we find ourselves concentrating more on fighting pimples, dating, what's in, what's out, who's popular, who's not, movies, television, video games, music groups, celebrity gossip, the future, and the feeling that everyone else knows something we don't. During this, we cling to our basic belief systems in order to have a sense of identity, direction, and separation from the insanity of our collective illusion, while trying to fit into a social group without getting teased or beaten up for not having the right label on our t-shirt. Our parents continue disciplining us, our religions try to baptize us, and global corporations spend millions of dollars figuring out how to distract us into buying their particular brand of breakfast cereal.

During all of this chaos our sex hormones kick in... of which we are told a little about our anatomy, reproductive aspects, and that we should avoid engaging in any sexual activity until we get married... or love someone... or graduate... or get our own apartment... or use a condom... actually, we're not really sure when we should start having sex, but we should defiantly wait until some future time to have it. Since sex is a natural instinct during this stage of life, the concept of abstinence is based on opinion...

often rooted in Judeo-Christian ethics left over from the repressive Victorian age. Rather than teaching us that sex is indispensable to human happiness, many of us are taught to see sex as a fall from grace by using fear tactics and abstract punishments like Hell to persuade us to wait. So, we go to great lengths to organize our belief system to support abstinence... or just go ahead and do it anyway.

Since our belief system is based on opinions and expectations, the billions of variables provided by our civilization to create this belief system make it impossible to monitor our development without the use of generalization. Now, it is not my intention to dissect the psychological variables occurring during child development. There are thousands of studies on child development performed by people who have a far greater knowledge about the human condition than I do. I am merely pointing out the complexity of it. Mentally, we grow as our thoughts are guided by our foundation through humankind's collective illusion toward a predetermined goal. Biologically, our bodies mature faster than our civilization cares for them to and we spend a great deal of time having our basic instincts suppressed in an effort to domesticate us. As a civilization, we have trouble synchronizing mental and biological development leaving room for a great deal of confusion when differing belief systems try to close the gap. Then, once we are of legal age, free of school and parental limitations, we begin building our life with the blueprints, tools, and materials given to us by our family members, teachers, preachers, politicians, political activists, friends, television commercials, and other people we hope aren't insane or trying to sell us something. The foundation we laid as children defines the building materials we use as adults, and our design must meet the social standards and ideals of everyone who contributed to our belief system... so we try to make it look good... preferably with no windows as we don't want anyone seeing the mess that's inside.

“Mess”? Well, taking a close look at human evolution, we all seem to be in a hurry to get somewhere, but we're not really sure where we're going. We just continue on a course set out for us before we were born... by people who are already dead... hoping everything will fit together by the time we're done building it. It doesn't help that science and industry have increased the tempo of life to an alarming degree of insanity giving us very little time for self-reflection. We get so caught up in following our blueprint toward a predetermined goal that we never really take the time to process our childhood... and we begin building our house without taking a closer look at our design. As we grow older, we realize there may be a few design problems when our foundation is met with conflicting ideas... but there's little time for design changes when the rent's due. So we stay on the same course, ignoring or fighting anyone who challenges our belief system in an effort to save our house and our sanity. This can lead to anger, depression, worry, and other emotions we as westerners are taught to hide in an effort to show off a good house. After all, it is our house, our outward identity, which allows us to be part of a social group. It is in this social group that we hope to find friends, lovers, and support to accompany us through life. This need to show off a good house goes back to our basic animal instincts... by showing weakness in nature, we get left behind so the herd can keep moving. It may be this fear of rejection and abandonment that keeps us going forward without looking back.

Eventually, many of us must make various changes in our life so we can keep moving forward. This can be difficult as Alan Watts points out that, “we want to improve ourselves, but the self that wants to improve is the one trying to do the improving.” We are like a dog chasing our own tail. We get divorced, get remarried, get reborn, get a new car, get some implants, get a trainer, have some children, change our hair style, change our clothes, change location, change jobs, change genders... all in the hope of creating peace and happiness. This is much easier than processing our childhood in an effort to understand where our confusion may be coming from. But, soon, many of us realize this “fresh start” approach only creates a temporary feeling of happiness that eventually fades with time... usually just before we decide to make another change.

Some of us don't make any changes because we believe the sacrifices we make in this life will be rewarded when we retire, go to heaven, reincarnate, or whatever else we've devised as compensation for hanging onto a belief system whose primary goal is to keep itself alive. We believe there is a happy day coming, though it may be very far away, and we continue sacrificing our lives hoping for a reward when that day finally comes. This reward requires that we focus on the future to bring us happiness and we often become fanatical about the beliefs that guide us toward that future. This creates a narrow mindedness that acts as a blinder toward any outside stimulus unsupportive of our current state of mind. During this time of sacrifice, we distract ourselves from our current condition by searching the world of man, the great illusion, for something to occupy our time until this divine event arrives... something to help us overcome our depression and anxiety so we can keep moving forward without altering our course like television, video games, alcohol, sex, movies, music, commemorative plate collections, the internet, the private lives of others, macramé, and happy pills of all shapes and sizes. The world has become a mad house of distraction and fantasy. The modernized accessibility of these distractions has greatly contributed to the depth of our insanity. By insanity, I mean our obsessive search for happiness in the illusion of mankind. As we fill our mind with distraction, it becomes so noisy that we become deaf to anything other than our own madness. Then we search for more distractions to distract us from the madness. We become so concerned with distracting ourselves, and the happiness these distractions will bring, that we forget to be happy when the distractions arrive. This is because we are preoccupied with creating more distractions. This creates an endless loop of unconscious searching that fits Howard Zinn's definition of fanaticism: "When you find you're going in the wrong direction, you double your speed."

While some of us search for distractions, others begin seeking guidance in an effort to find something we may have overlooked. The belief is; once we find whatever is missing in our life, we can fix it, and begin living in the eternal happiness promised us as children. This begins our journey into “self help”. Just as there are hundreds of theories on childhood development, there seem to be more theories on how to undo the damage caused by it. There are seven steps to organizing our thoughts, ten ways to tap into our natural genius, over a hundred paths toward love, eight secrets to success that help us define our goals, manage others effectively, let go of our grief, rebuild our self esteem, learn how to live alone, laugh at anxiety, deal with abandonment, lose weight fast, and have a successful date life while transforming anger, conquering codependency, and

creating exotic sexual fantasies with our partner. So, if we're ready to increase our personal power and gain control over our life, let go of our past, overcome our phobias, with more money, and an overall feeling of fulfillment and happiness then there are thousands of classes, books, and talk shows ready to help create the new "us".

Now, I don't have anything against self help, used correctly it can organize our thought process, give words to feelings we are unable to express, and fill us with a little reassurance that someone may know what's going on out there. During my studies, I have seen several different ways to approach self-help. One involves the use of a book, class, therapist, or pamphlet to find a missing piece of information that will hopefully bring clarity to our minds, peace to our lives, and joy to our hearts. It's the "missing link" theory. This theory implies that there is some piece of information we missed along the way that will bring everything we've learned into focus. This doesn't work very often as many of us hope this "missing link" will support our predetermined course... when it was the foundation of this course that lead to our uncertainty in the first place.

Another approach to self-help takes us back to the "fresh start" example I discussed earlier. Instead of changing a few things around to create distractions from our life, we throw everything into a box, put it in the back of our mind, and focus on living a new life completely different from the one we just locked away. This is similar to the "reborn" concept in certain sects of Christianity where all our sins are forgiven allowing for a new and better life ahead of us. Overjoyed at the thought of leaving everything behind, we fill our minds with new ideas, experiences, and concepts hoping again that they will come together to form a new foundation on which we can build a better and more joyful life. Because we are trying to rebuild from the ground up, we often feel behind everyone else and put in a rush job to catch up. After the dust settles, and we are living in our new life, we still feel an underlying current of depression that no longer seems to have any basis for existing. We know we should be happy, we know we are blessed each day, and we have several highlighted books supporting this. So why aren't we happy? Why does our house still feel like it's about ready to collapse in on itself? Well, there is a problem with this approach. It is very difficult to build a new foundation on top of an old one... without the old one affecting the new one. Basically, we've created an elaborate distraction by dive-bombing into various self-help theories to break away from our depression. In doing so, we've hidden the original cause of that depression so deeply in our mind that it appears we're depressed for absolutely no reason and we often end up taking pills to suppress it even further.

Then there is the "when life gives us lemons, make lemonade" approach. Although this phrase often invokes an almost unavoidable desire to vomit on the person uttering it, the changing of our perception is precisely the direction we want to focus our attention. By changing the way we look at something, we can actually see it for the first time. Lets look at our foundation again. The two undercurrents that guide our thought processes are peace and fear. If we are born peaceful, then fear must be learned during our domestication. Civilization was created so we could live without fear.... fear of starvation, fear of helplessness, fear of sickness, fear of being eaten.... now we have everything we need to create life without fear, but it is still our fear of rejection that

guides our maturation and innovation. As we domesticate an animal born into captivity, we train it to obey us by creating a foundation based on control. As we are domesticated into captivity, we are trained to believe that if we act or think differently than what we are taught, we are “bad”... and we will be labeled “bad” until our thought process coincides with what we are taught. This creates a foundation based on fear that leaves little room for change if we are to remain part of the social group that helped create us. Since our foundation defines our building materials, this fear becomes the blueprint used in the construction of our life. This means, when our mind focuses on a belief, it will only embrace outside stimulus that supports that belief. Unfortunately, this allows for a great deal of information to go unnoticed until our perception is altered to something other than fear. We use selective sight and hearing to take in outside stimulus that supports our beliefs while ignoring or disputing anything that contradicts our belief system because we fear rejection from our friends, our spouse, our children, our parents, our church, our country, and our god. Over time this creates an unconscious perception that continues the support of these beliefs even when we are not thinking about them. This can go completely unnoticed as it affects every aspect of our life; our perception, desires, beliefs, consumption, the way we look at our past, the way we perceive our future, our ability to communicate with others, and the way we raise our children.

The best comparison I can make of how fear can affect us is of placing a frog in a boiling pot of water. If you put a frog into a boiling pot of water, they are likely to jump out as fast as they can, cursing you as they go. If you put a frog in a warm pot of water, and slowly turn up the heat, they will sit there quite contently until they eventually die as the pot begins to boil. The same goes with human beings. As children, if we are told we have no reason to be afraid, we would find ourselves rebelling against anything that tells us otherwise and jump out of the pot. But, if we are told we have nothing to fear as long as we are good, we attach ourselves to various belief systems that focus on avoiding the opposite of “good”. As belief systems have a different definition of what “good” is, belonging to one causes separation from another which creates fear. As our fear of rejection guides our progression through life, the boundaries between “good” and “bad” become clouded by experience. Our confusion grows as we don’t know what to believe... and the pot begins to boil. Some of us go into therapy, find a god, buy a new television, or run naked down a busy intersection while screaming at the voices in our head.

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So, apparently the “blueprint theory” has flaws. The belief that we must finish our house before we can live in it implies that life does not begin until we have everything our blueprint says we need in order to be accepted and comfortably civilized. This fear of being incomplete makes it difficult to look back at what we’re building without feeling like we’re going off schedule or running out of time. As our house is built, we worry about having everything we need to finish building, while avoiding anything that threatens our foundation. As our interior becomes cluttered and unlivable, our fear of rejection creates a struggle to keep our outside looking exactly the same as everyone else. This generates a chain reaction where everyone who moves into our neighborhood feels

they need to look the same as well... if they don't, we avoid them because they are different, barbarians, scapegoats we project our own fear of rejection onto. This fear has created a very cannibalistic civilization living in an illusion to avoid rejection, which appears to be a self-perpetuating loop that repeats itself as each generation is born.

So, how can we break out of this loop? Well, human beings have existed for thousands of years... so we've had just as many years to create this endless cycle of domestication designed to manage, discipline, restrain, and govern our behavior so we can become productive members of our civilization. As civilians, we require some form of domestication to live in the world created by those before us, but the fear we inherit during our domestication motivates us to seek out happiness by believing that peace is something to be obtained... when it is the opposite of peace that must be unlearned. Since we are always at peace, it is our personal perception that tells us otherwise. Our perceptions are inherited from an illusion that uses them for its own survival. To break the loop we must change our perception. To change our perception we must remember peace. The process of remembering peace is achieved by redirecting our outward search inward to discover what we fear through a process of guided self-observation. This is difficult to do as our civilization is built on consumerism, which depends on our outward search for happiness to survive. Just as everything in nature is connected to insure its survival, everything we've created outside of nature is also connected. By breaking the connection, by breaking the loop, we risk change. This is why our society does not exactly support an inward journey toward self-discovery.

How do we begin the journey? Each of us has created our own universe, our own personal mythology inside our mind based on our understanding of the natural world and the world of man. Therefore, each of us will have a different journey through our awakening... but the first step is the same for all of us. If we know that fear is learned and peace is our natural state of mind, then we should direct our attention inward to discover what we fear. In order to do this, we need to understand what fear is and how it affects our thought processes. Consider that each of our thoughts are connected to other thoughts by an endless number of associations. Outside stimulus is processed by these connected thoughts to create a perception of what we are taking in. Over time, our thoughts create facilitated pathways. This means our associations become easier and more detailed as we continue to use them, which creates an elaborate mental expressway connecting the thoughts we use on a regular basis. Now consider that fear is like a mental virus. When fear attaches itself to a thought, and that thought becomes associated with other thoughts, our mind can become completely infected through an endless series of connective associations. As this fear infects our mental expressway, the speed at which our thoughts become infected can throw us into a deep state of depression. It does this by attaching to our thought processes, our memories, our belief system, and often goes unnoticed as it's expressed outwardly as anxiety, anger, depression, worry, guilt and all feelings that are the opposite of peace. Soon our uninfected memories make us long for what we no longer have. When this happens, our uninfected thoughts become associated with loss. As our depression grows, all new thoughts and experiences are processed with our infected perception. Our inner judge creates endless looping sentences that echo so loudly in our mind that many of us have to take medicine to quiet

them down... and this can last for years. Clinically, this is often defined as a chronic depressive disorder. This can lead to chemical imbalances in the brain, physical imbalances in the body, and mental disorders ranging from dramatic mood swings to forms of schizophrenia. Many of us were told that depression is a sign of personal weakness, which creates a loop of suppression that increases our condition. By seeing the complexity of how depression is created, we can understand why it is often difficult for us to overcome.

A brief scenario: We fall in love with someone. It is a love greater than we have ever known. A love so vast that nothing short of death could separate us. A love that will last an eternity and beyond. Now, when they leave us for someone passing through town in a traveling carnival, our perception of this loss will affect all thoughts associated with it. Given that love tends to create a facilitated pathway of associations through our past, present, and future... a negative perception created by our fear of rejection can infect our entire state of being... to the point that we end up curled up in a fetal position on top of a pile of torn up pictures and shredded love letters, while an endless stream of tears soaks our face as we search our mind for what we did wrong. Since each of our thoughts is associated with another thought, every relationship we've ever had, every mistake we've ever made, every negative reinforcement we've ever received can attach to our current situation creating a facilitated pathway that can infect every thought in our head. Our judge uses our infected thoughts to create an endless stream of looping voices telling exactly what we did wrong. In many cases, we lose our ability to see beyond our misery as we desperately search for something to bring us happiness. As this continues, our perception creates a "poor me" mentality that seems so real it leads to a clinical depressive disorder followed by a chemical imbalance in the brain that we believe can only be alleviated by heavy medication. We continue using this medication indefinitely, or until something is able to distract us from our depression. This is of-course a worst-case scenario... but it happens to people every day.

Now that we have a basic understanding of fear, we can direct our attention inward to rediscover peace. "Peace" does not mean having money, having a perfect job, having a lover, or meditating to the sound of water rippling through a pair of stereo speakers. Someone described "peace" not as a place with no noise, hardships, or illness, but as being in the midst of these things and still being calm in our heart. Knowing this we can discover what changes our perception from peace to fear by analyzing what brings us the opposite of peace. We do this by using different tools such as books, friends, family, therapy, bodywork, and other modalities that can assist us in the journey back to the root of our unhappiness... the root of our fear. Since each of us has created our own perceptions of our past, present, and future, the path of this journey will be different for everyone... though the goal is the same... unlearn fear and remember peace.

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As for me, I didn't follow any particular path toward my awakening. I wanted to figure out what was causing my depression so I could overcome it. Over time, I realized the

fault in my thinking was that something outside myself was causing my depression. Therefore, I believed something outside of myself could bring me peace. After years of searching for something outside myself to complete me, I changed the direction of my search. I began a journey inside my mind to discover where my depression was coming from. The path I took is clear to me now, only because I've walked it. I began by following something that was causing me a great amount of anxiety from my present state of mind back to my earliest memory of it. As I did this, I found myself reliving each moment with the same perception and emotion I experienced when it occurred. This was very difficult as my memory was made by a very frightened child. After I calmed myself down, I realized a great amount of my past was still under the same perception and emotion I created when it occurred. Unconsciously, this fear gave it power over my present state of mind. With this new understanding I worked through the memory by seeing it with a different perspective. By realizing the fear I experienced during this memory was based on someone else's desire to control and domesticate me, I was able to release the power the situation had over me. Then I went back further into my mind, into my foundation, and released the original idea that created this situation in the first place. This caused a domino effect that released several other memories affected by the same idea. When this happened, I felt reborn.

Once I realized how to do this, I began searching for any unresolved issues that may still have power over my present state of mind. I made a mental list of everything in my life's history that caused me to feel the opposite of peace. Over time I went back and dealt with each memory by working backward to its origin from my present state of mind. I tried to look at everything with my new perception by releasing the judge given to me by my authority figures. Good archeologists do not judge the past... they just observe it. With the understanding that we all have the ability to feel peace during everything we encounter, I understand now that anything in my history that still affects my present has somehow been infected with fear. Each situation I deal with has roots in the foundation I created as a child, and I am seeing the end result of that creation. An end result created by my fear of rejection combined with my belief that something outside of myself will bring me happiness. All of this fear was learned. And, since fear is learned, I can see how the infection spread through my thoughts by a series of associated pathways. By changing my perception, I released it from my past, present, and future using the same associated pathways that spread the infection.

It's pretty amazing how the world looks through my eyes now that I'm awake again. I learned how to question everything in my foundation, which caused a ripple effect that spread through each associated memory allowing my thoughts to reshape themselves based on my own ideology. The desire to know about life after death has lost its power over me, much like everything else I used to give my energy to. I changed, not because I was trying to escape something or distract myself... but because that is the direction my perception took me. And the funniest thing is... as the dust settles around me, I see I am right back where I started, only this time I've created my own ideology to guide my thought processes... and the undercurrent of depression that plagued me for the better part of my life is gone.

As I said before, the journey back to the root of our unhappiness will be different for everyone. Since I already made the journey, I would like to give anyone else who is interested in taking the trip to consider a few things before they travel into their mind to discover the root of their fear.

- Although our past is obtainable through thought, our memory can be affected positively and negatively by various events in our life. This means that what we remember may not be real. So, it is important to look at a memory from its conception to gain a clear understanding of it.
- The only power a memory has over us is what we give it. If a memory is painful, to the point that we end up calling all our friends to calm us down, we should take in a deep breath with the understanding that it is just a memory.
- The emotion of a painful memory can create hooks that hold us to a previous way of thinking. By giving our energy to a memory, the emotion attached to it can affect our present state of mind. As a painful memory is encountered, we can let go of our emotional attachment by changing our perception of it. By doing so, we will let go of the hooks and regain the power those memories had over us.
- We may have altered our memory of certain events in an effort to protect us. This is an untruth we told ourselves so we could move forward without inner or outward confrontation... and it's very interesting to see what made us create the untruth in the first place. By seeing through our untruths, we can discover what we feared. Then we can follow that fear back to its origin and let it go.
- Be prepared for repressed memories. By following fear toward its root, we often encounter events our mind closed off from us as a form of protection. Much like white blood cells surrounding a virus, our mind can block off certain sections of our thought patterns as hazardous and off limits. This prevents a thought or group of memories from associating themselves with anything else to prevent further infection. Sometimes we know these events exist and have to choose to look at them. Sometimes we've completely forgotten about the event and finding it is described as a breakthrough... as we "break through" a barrier created by our own mind. It can be quite an amazing experience, while at the same time disorientating and frightening. If it is something we don't feel we can deal with, there is no problem with seeing a therapist or talking to a friend.
- Sometimes we fear being rejected by others because they don't approve the path we've chosen. To regain approval, we convince others and ourselves that our life is out of our control so we can continue moving in the direction we want to move. This places responsibility on something else like divine intervention or genetics. We hope this will allow us to continue the direction we're heading without rejection. Instead of being proud that we had the strength to make such a decision... we gave up that power to avoid confrontation. By looking at events that were "out of our control", we can see if we just wanted to go our own way

without confrontation. If so, we can reclaim the power we forfeited to something else and enjoy the freedom we gained by our own choices.

- Breaking a loop: our mind has a habit of creating loops. These loops are made of inner voices and memories that repeat themselves over and over in our minds. Aside from the various song lyrics, movie quotes, and product jingles, these loops are often created by depressive thoughts we can't seem to let go of. Whenever we are having a thought that we've had before, we can say, "I've thought this already". This breaks the loop. Continue doing this and the thought will loop less frequently and eventually stop.
- In nature, there is no good or evil. The concept of good and bad was created to assist in our domestication. As we carry our perception of ourselves toward adulthood, it's important to remember that someone else defined "bad" for us... and they may have not known what they were talking about. Were we "bad", or were we not meeting someone else's idea of "good"? Like forgiving a parent for judging us by the concepts given to them as children, we must forgive ourselves for continuing that belief long after we left home. We were not "bad children", we were just "children".
- As we go into our mind, we will need to free up some space in our head to process what we find. This can be obtained through meditation, minimalism, and cutting down on our distractions such as television, news, Yahoo, movies, and our fascination with how much cleavage celebrities are showing this year.
- One more: We should use a journal and write down what we're planning to do on the first page. This creates a rope that we can hold onto as we go in. Then organize the events of our life into a linear time line. This will make it easier to trace back what lead up to specific events as we explore each year of our life.

Now all that is left is to begin the journey... actually, we are just continuing a journey we're already on, for the only way to truly know peace, is to have lived its opposite. We are the architects of our life. We are the creators of our world. We have the power to release thoughts that no longer serve us. This is our entrance into adulthood... when we are no longer controlled by the illusion of man... when we create our journey not toward peace, but in peace. Our change in perception sends ripples through time, healing our mind and its affect on the world. For the energy we generate through our perception influences not only our creation, but also the creations of our civilization.

Steve Reedy
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The only way out is through - unknown