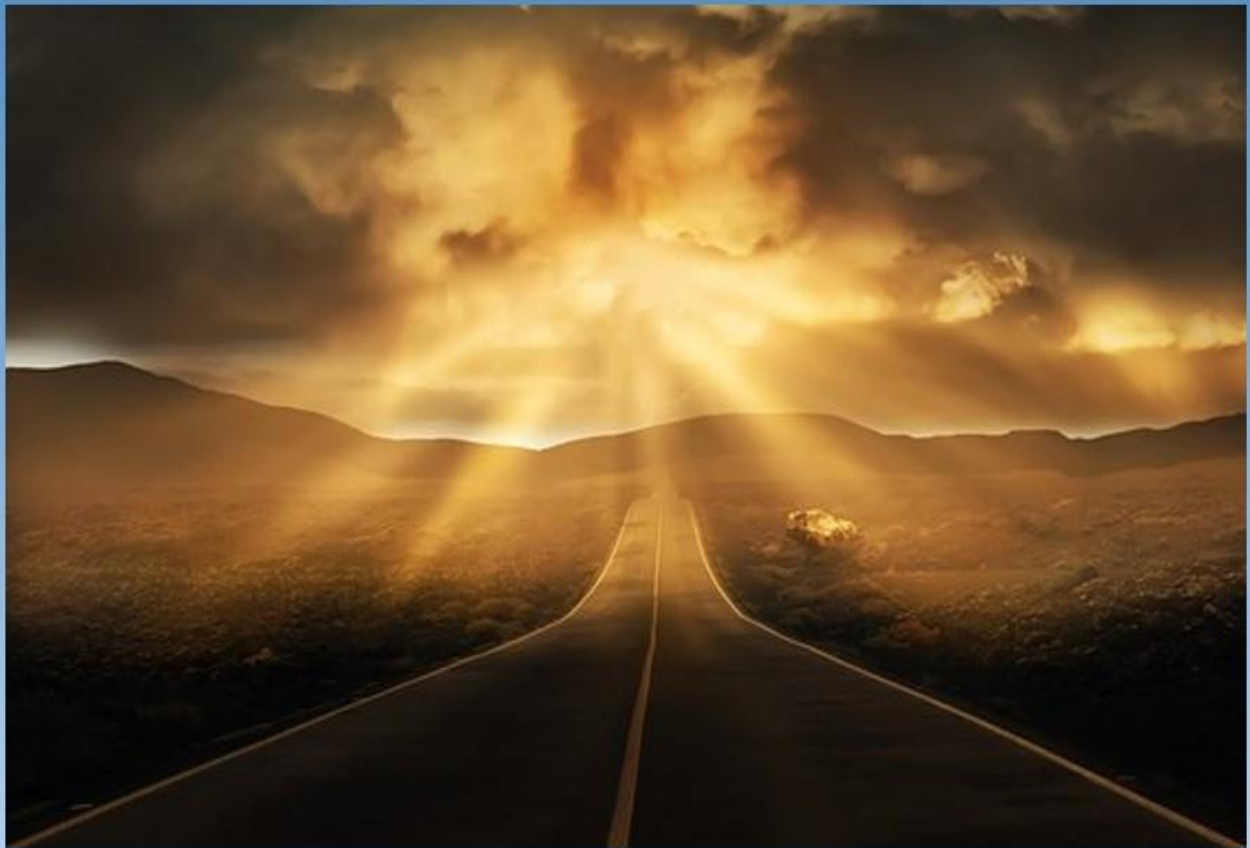


Authentic Self

2021 Edition



Authentic Self is a collection of articles by the author that offer insights into our every day struggles and prevailing social realities.

Frederick Edward Fabella

PERSPECTIVES

How Do We Decide?



Our actions and reactions in any given situation are precipitated by how we feel at that moment. The behavior that we exhibit is often the product of our emotional state, whether we are happy, despondent, angry, afraid and so forth. But going further than this, we can also say that how we feel is a product of the thoughts that were evoked by circumstances. To illustrate this point, when we see people from afar whispering among themselves and then one of them looks at us, we tend to create a story in our minds about what we are witnessing. And the conclusion that we draw may be right or it may be wrong.

But the feeling that is created in us by such a conclusion is what will ultimately produce the behavior in which we will engage. If we conclude

that the people are whispering about us, then this might cause us to feel anxiety or even spite. And our consequent reaction will align itself to the thought and the feeling that came before.

Each decision that we make and have made fosters in us our analytical thinking skills. We are able to better analyze each situation and make the appropriate choice of action. This process helps us develop confidence in our decision-making which should lead to independence of thought.

But on occasion, we find ourselves in a bigger dilemma because of certain faulty decisions. And often we have no choice but to face the consequences and to bear the fruit of our mistakes.

How do we prevent this from happening? Doubting our decisions is not encouraged, for this may inadvertently erode our ability to trust ourselves and could leave us emotionally crippled. But what we should do is challenge the thought process that helped us arrive at the decision. Making faulty assumptions or erroneous interpretations of a situation could lead us to catastrophic decisions. Therefore prior to any choice we make, we ought to challenge these assumptions and automatic thoughts. Applying this to the example given, we should not assume that the people we see whispering is talking about us. This is mere paranoia and should not be entertained.

Therefore, we should regularly think about how we think. Experts call this metacognition. This

may help us see why we decide to do things and whether or not our choices are healthy and appropriate.

What Makes a Decision Right?



I have asked this of some people and many say it is the consequence of a particular choice that often dictates whether a previous decision can be deemed correct. We can therefore look at what resulted from that decision whether it was harmful or beneficial. Drawing from this, it would then follow that any future choice we make should take into consideration its potential consequences. And if the apparent outcome of a decision we are considering appears beneficial, then it must be the right one. But is it really that simple?

It will largely depend on what we believe to be beneficial or harmful to us. This becomes completely subjective. Each of us will have a different standard for what may be beneficial. There are those who may be driven by immediate satisfaction while others consider certain factors such as one's sense of accomplishment or the fulfillment of a deeper

purpose. And some consequences often take much time to fully unfold. A failure now brought about by a prior irresponsible decision can even be the unseen factor pushing us to greater success later on.

This is true even when we consider the decision to enter into a romantic relationship with someone. Isn't it that we often feel that loving someone is the right choice up until the moment when we finally decide that it is wrong, due to some unforeseen eventuality? The decision to love the wrong person or to enter into what can be considered a wrong relationship can bring about realizations in us that may even pave the way to something better in the future.

Many obsess about which decision is right for them. Like finding the mathematical solution to a complex equation, people want to arrive at the correct answer. And then there are those who even consult fortune tellers in order that they may see the future and avoid unfortunate outcomes.

But I believe life is far too complicated for us to be able to reduce the matter of making decisions as a mere question of what may be right or wrong. Far too many factors are involved. And we have to consider what roles other people will play in our life's journey and the unexpected opportunities that may come.

Life is an adventure. We can choose to see the world with open eyes and look at each experience as a means for greater self-realization. And it is our attitudes and our mindset that allow us to see each decision not

Breaking the Cycle of Mistakes



When the end result of our decision displeases us, that's when we come to the conclusion that we have made a mistake. We then try to rectify what inevitably follows. But most of the time, we live to regret it. We have to survive the aftermath of our errors.

do not change. It is usually the case that whatever emotional needs we lack tend to affect us throughout our lives. And these transform into our weaknesses.

Whether it is a lack of attention or not having someone to depend on or a broken trust, it will control our actions without us knowing it. And each time we are faced with a situation that brings forth our weakness, we will predictably fall victim to it. Thus, our mistakes repeat themselves over and over.

Unless we become aware that the reason for our mistakes is an underlying personal frailty, we are bound to commit them again and again. Therefore, the first step is to ask ourselves why we keep doing the things that are liable to harm us in the end. What needs do they satisfy? And what are the origins of these unsatisfied needs? Once we answer these questions, we will be able to recognize our weaknesses and avoid situations that cause us to exhibit them. In so doing, will we be able to cease the cycle of repetitive suffering and claim with finality that we have learned once and for all from our mistakes.

Is Luck in Control of Your Life?



Imagine living in a time when people believed that everything that occurs is by the agency of deities and unseen spirits and that one's future is fixed by destiny. People would then attribute whatever happens to them to the will of some greater power. And this would then lead to them to doing nothing but endlessly attempting to please these unseen forces, that is assuming they can be pleased at all. Consequently, people will then begin to believe that one is favored depending upon whatever fortune that befalls that person. One's fortune would become nothing more than a matter of luck.

But the concept of luck is merely an abstraction. It is just a name we have given to a situation wherein a person's fortune turns out to be good or bad. By its very own nature, the idea of luck does not take into consideration a person's abilities and willingness to improve whatever situation in which he finds himself. Luck of and by itself, is merely a word that represents such an idea. Whether or not it does exist is a matter

of belief. What if we find an individual who does not believe in the action of unseen forces? In all likelihood, that individual will also not believe in luck. He would most probably believe in his own intelligence, skills and desire to make things happen for himself.

Therefore, an individual has the choice of believing whether or not such unseen forces are in control of his life. But who should we say is better off? Is it the person who believes in luck or the person who believes that his life is in his hands?

Leaving it all up to fate is something that many people do. Holding on to superstitious beliefs is quite common. But maybe there is an underlying reason behind this belief. Does a person believe in luck because he feels he is not in control of his life? Does he observe superstitious practices because doing so removes from him any responsibility for whatever failure he may meet? Does he want a convenient excuse when things go wrong? To blame frustration and failure on such an abstract idea as 'bad luck' does indeed free the person from blaming himself. Perhaps believing in luck is just another defense mechanism.

When one's business goes bankrupt or when one's exam scores are low or when one's lover leaves or when one gets sick, he can simply blame it all on bad luck. Never mind if the business was a bad idea in the first place or if he did not study for the exam or if he did not take care of the romantic relationship or if his bad eating habits were the causes of all the things that have gone wrong in his life. It's easier to

blame luck or the lack of it than to blame himself. In fact, it's much easier to just be lazy and wait for good fortune to come than to strive hard for success.

For one's situation to change, one's mindset must undergo a transformation. And the first thing that needs to be done is to get rid of the ideas of luck, superstition and fate and take back the control that one has lost. Believing that we are in control and that our success depends on us is perhaps the key to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Knowing What We Want



Oftentimes we are unaware of what we want. Many of us go through life without having a clear end goal. Or we know what we desire but fail to see the appropriate path to take.

And when we finally know what we long for, the next question we should ask is whether our goal is realistic? Is it attainable? Or will we become frustrated in the end?

Happiness is perhaps everyone's objective. But our definition of it may vary. Some may see it as enjoyment while others conceive of it as fulfillment. And society also plays a role in how we define happiness since we tend to set other people as our standard.

But there are questions we must first answer as we work towards our goal. Is what we want, really the path to that happiness we seek? And will achieving this goal make our lives better?

Life deals us with a finite number of chances to achieve what we want. Our resources and our strength are not unlimited. And balancing our time between our obligations and our goals is perhaps the most challenging part.

We must also be careful with our decisions. Sometimes, there are points of no return, of opportunities that are forever lost. But we should always be open to other possibilities and we should never accept defeat.

Trying is Not Enough



We all desire some degree of achievement in life. We all hope for a modicum of success. Unfortunately, many of us have been conditioned to believe that having grand goals is a delusion and that we should face the reality that most of us are not meant to be success stories. And it is for this reason that some see success as merely a dream.

This is the mentality of a person who says 'I will try.' These words imply the absence of commitment, a lack of determination and an unwillingness to give one's all. People who say they will try, see life as a gamble and that the future is determined by luck alone.

When we say we will try, it is the same as saying we accept failure as the likely result. And this is equivalent to admitting our inevitable defeat.

Imagine an individual, who wishes to quit an addiction, that person cannot merely claim that he will try. To do so would be like saying that he doesn't really believe quitting will work, but what the heck. It would be the same as stating that he doesn't believe in himself. And by

implicitly admitting this, he has already surrendered before he had even begun.

If we truly desire success, then there is no room for half-hearted measures. Triumph demands nothing less than one-hundred percent effort and an unwavering resolve. Our life stories should be victories instead of defeats. And in order to achieve this, we must believe that in life, there is no such thing as trying. Just do.

The Perils of Denial



The inability to accept reality is often the mind's automatic response to a painful loss.

One's possessions, status, health and loved ones, these are what we inevitably grow accustomed to as part of our lives. And we naturally do not wish any of these to disappear, for they are an integral part of what defines us. Thus, their loss becomes unacceptable. Even the mere possibility is itself unimaginable.

And so, we do all we can to prevent such loss from happening. But what if the loss is inevitable? What if no matter what we do, it will still happen? The prospect of such loss is then perceived by the mind as a threat to one's self-concept. And in order to negate this threat, we resort to denial.

Denial may sometimes be beneficial. It can help ease the pain of such loss as it facilitates our gradual adjustment to this new reality. But many times, it may also drive us to decisions that may prove more harmful in the end. By not accepting the possibility of such a loss, we are driven to acts of desperation.

The version of reality that we adhere to as a consequence of denial becomes faulty and erroneous. And for as long as our denial persists, our reality remains distorted and the choices we make become based on misrepresentations of the truth.

Loss is a normal part of life. It is what makes it meaningful because we learn to appreciate and be grateful for what we have during the time that we have it. Accepting this fact allows us to face reality without the need to distort the truth.

Trapped by Our Choices



A philosopher once wrote that it is necessary to constantly examine our lives in order to see where we have been, where we are now and where we are going. Let us take a step back and look at our lives for a moment. What are we engaged in at present? Are we doing well in our studies? Does the work we have give us satisfaction? Are our relationships and friendships fulfilling? Do we appreciate the life we now live?

If we are dissatisfied with the way things are then we should discover what it is that we do not like. And if we are miserable with our situation, then why do we allow things to remain the way they are? Is it because we have gotten used to the routine of our existence? Have we grown too comfortable with the life we live? Have we given up on our ambitions? Or are we just too lazy to do anything about it?

Unfortunately, many of us surrender to our circumstances. We simply accept our fate that our lives will be like this forever. Sometimes we feel trapped, helpless and unable to change anything.

We often tell ourselves that we were forced into our present circumstances by events beyond our control. Yet that is not true. We may have overlooked the fact that whatever is happening to us at present continues to happen because of the choices we have made and still make. It is a sad reality that there are times when we do not wish to accept responsibility for what is happening to us. But no matter who or what we think brought us to where we are now, we chose to let it happen. We cannot blame anyone. We cannot hide behind the convenient excuse that it's someone else's fault why we are here.

But perhaps we remain where we are not because we do not see that we have the power to change the things around us, but because we are afraid of change itself.

Regardless of the reason, we cannot ignore the truth that we are in control, that we are responsible for the decisions we make -- even if our decision is to do nothing. If we are unhappy with our lives, then we should choose change. We should decide to break free of the prison of our unhappy existence before it is too late. Or we may find ourselves many years from now looking back at our choices with regret.

Blaming Others for Your Unhappiness



It is far easier to put the blame on someone else when things go wrong. You can blame your boss for how miserable your job is. You can blame your teacher for your inability to understand the lesson. You can blame your romantic partner for your failing relationship. You can blame your parents for your emotional struggles. And you can even blame the government for the poverty that you suffer.

It actually makes you feel much better when you find fault in others, because placing the blame on yourself opens you up to feelings of regret, guilt and even shame. Doing so makes you focus on your own flaws and mistakes. And this may allow feelings of worthlessness to set in.

But blaming others for your problems does not solve them. It only adds bitterness to your already miserable state. And by believing that others are at fault for your troubles removes your ability to take control of the situation. It renders you helpless and paralyzes you into simply accepting things as they are. In effect, it makes you surrender to your unhappiness.

Blaming others may very well be a defense mechanism because it protects your ego from the pain of seeing your failures. But it also distorts reality and hinders the possibility for any meaningful change to occur. Instead of engaging in this, it may be far better to take responsibility for the situation in which you find yourself. Doing this allows you the opportunity for self-realization, self-correction and further growth.

Helplessness Unlearned



Many of us experience a sense of melancholy because we have been conditioned to believe that we are powerless to change our lives. We begin to see the monotonous routine of our existence. What aggravates this is the presence of uncaring and callous individuals who inflict constant and ever-present misery upon us. We suffer daily from being captives unable to alter our circumstances. But what fills us with dismay is the thought that things will be like this forever. And this creates in us the desire to escape. But escape seems impossible. And the trepidation

builds up. It reaches a point when all we can feel are dread and despair.

But despite how miserable things appear to be, maybe there is a way to alter our existence. And that is by beginning to see our circumstances differently. This sense of helplessness is of itself merely a belief. Why do we sometimes feel this way? Is it because we consider ourselves to be inadequate or weak? Is it because we think we lack the ability or the skill? Or do we believe we can do nothing to change our lives because we see ourselves as less than the people who succeed?

These self-defeating thoughts cause us to feel powerless. But the truth of it is, we feel helpless only because we believe we are. Overcoming these thoughts entails a gradual and systematic process of empowering one's self. To develop the sense of being in control of one's life involves changing small things first. And this means doing things we normally do not engage in or perhaps we were too shy to do before. Confidence in one's ability to have novel experiences is slowly built. In time, we start to feel that we are somehow in charge of our lives. Once this sense of control is achieved, we can unlearn the helplessness that once imprisoned us.

Self-Pity



Self-pity may occur as a result of frustration or an unfortunate event in one's life. It is a type of sadness that is unique in itself because it affects people who feel that everything that happens to them is the result of chance. These are individuals who believe in luck, fate, destiny or fortune. Sometimes being overly religious may also cause a person to feel this way. There are those who may even claim that everything is the will of a higher power. Sadly, when a person goes to this extent, he may find himself doing nothing and just wait for blessings to come.

The belief in luck is made worse when a person compares himself to others. By doing so and seeing that other people have it better, they become more despondent, because the belief that life is indeed unfair has been proven true for them.

Are these beliefs and behaviors in fact correct?

Is everything the result of chance? No, they are not. A person who believes in fate will sometimes say that romantic relationships are

also based on destiny. He may even claim that whether his partner will leave or stay in the relationship is a matter of fate. But a relationship is a two-way commitment that requires both people to constantly make an effort in order for it to grow. The life of the relationship is not a matter of chance at all.

Should an individual compare himself with others? No, he should not. Merely looking at a person cannot tell you whether he or she has it better than you. You don't even know what that person's problems are. And even if you did, problems may affect people differently.

Is life unfair? No, because there is no such thing as a fair or unfair life. People don't get what is fair; people just get what they get.

Self-pity is unhealthy because it paralyzes a person into submission and surrender. It just renders him helpless. It creates in him the belief that he is unable to do anything about his life. Self-pity is a result of having the above false beliefs. The sooner they are discarded the sooner one's outlook on life will improve.

Enjoying the Misfortune of Others



How do we feel when we discover that something good has happened to someone we know? Are we genuinely happy for that person? On the other hand, what if we learn about a misfortune that has befallen that same individual?

Not everyone delights in the good fortune that others experience. Although, the supposed benevolent side of human nature should move us to be happy for others, sometimes this is not at all what we feel. Perhaps we may even experience a tinge of envy when people we know have it better than us.

Why is it that the news almost always features the tragic side of life? Crime, corruption and the tragedies that befall us have become the staple of our daily news. Have we become desensitized by the constant exposure to these unseemly occurrences? It would even appear that we no longer feel revulsion when faced with these

realities. In fact, some may even be driven by a morbid fascination at seeing the victims of lawlessness or the horrific catastrophes that others experience.

And when we look at the so-called *telenovelas* or tv drama shows, there is often an element of misery that befall the protagonists in the story. Again, it would seem that viewers patronize these shows because of it.

But maybe the media is culpable for having conditioned us to see only the tragic and the criminal. At the same time, it may also be the fault of the viewer for not exercising his right to a responsible choice of shows.

On a more personal level, why is it that many of us tend to engage in gossip about the negative things that happen to the people we know? Why does it seem that we love hearing about the troubles of others?

Whether we are watching tragic news and *telenovelas* or gossiping about other people, there is one thing in common in all of these. It is that many of us seem to delight in the misfortune of others. The Germans even have a name for this. They call it *schadenfreude*.

But what drives us to feel this way? Perhaps it is our own miseries, our own burdens or our own misfortunes that draw from deep within the need to feel that others have it worse than us. We want to know that we are not the only ones suffering. And we do this so that we do not bury ourselves in self-pity.

Perhaps this *schadenfreude* is a defense mechanism meant to protect us from further loss of self-esteem. It may even be a product of an unconscious mental process for survival. After all, if we believe we have it worse than everyone else, we may fall prey to acts of desperation or suicidal depression.

However, constantly engaging in a defense mechanism is unhealthy in itself, because it causes us to disengage from the reality of our own lives. If we perceive our lives to be miserable, then we should constructively address what makes it so, instead of merely reveling in the more tragic misfortunes of others.

BECOMING WHOLE

What Bothers You?



Before reading further, try doing a self-awareness check and attempt to find out how you are actually feeling right now. Are you anxious about something? Has some recent news made you unhappy? Are you facing a current issue that is irritating you? Or do you think that everything seems great at the moment?

It helps to pause and get a hold of your emotions and thoughts from time to time. Many fail to do this and they only realize too late that they are actually under severe stress. Like being able to listen to your body and identify potential symptoms of the beginnings of a physical illness, emotional self-awareness is one of the keys to a sound mind.

All living creatures possess an inherent programming to survive. And this awareness of

the things happening around people consciously or unconsciously allows them to automatically identify potential threats to their survival and well-being. This threat analysis is what keeps people from placing themselves in dangerous situations.

When something bothers you it only means that your mind has perceived a potential threat to your safety, your security or your self-esteem or that there is an ongoing diminution of the same in an area of your life. Your mind has either detected a threat to your survival or a loss in an area that affects your well-being.

But sometimes what bothers you are thoughts that may have no actual basis in reality. Or that whatever you are pondering at the moment may not even be worth thinking about. Some of these fears and anxieties might be unrealistic and irrational. Overthinking is the common term used nowadays by most to describe a situation where one tends to imagine what may go wrong with each decision that you consider making. Or you are constantly thinking about events that have happened in the past, things that you regret and what you can no longer change.

When you feel emotional discomfort, ask yourself first what it is that you are actually feeling. Label the emotion whether it is irritation, regret, guilt, worry or something else. After you have done this, try to pinpoint the thought, memory or issue that is triggering this emotion. And when you have clearly identified the thought ask yourself, should this bother you? To help you do this, think of those close to you and imagine if they were facing the same

issue and having the same thoughts. Use them as your baseline of comparison and ask, would this same issue bother them? If not, then it should not bother you too.

Taking Away the Power of Fear



What keeps us awake at night? What fears haunt us? What nightmares visit us over and over?

Worrying about things that are important to us is a normal experience. But when do we know when it has gone too far? We worry because we desire things to go our way. We want the best result in all our endeavors. We seek success and happiness and recoil from the prospect of misfortune.

Yet on occasion, our worries tend to encompass more and more aspects of our life. We worry about things that may never happen and imagine worse case scenarios or catastrophic outcomes. When we reach this point, we start having trouble concentrating because our mind

does nothing else except worry. Constant worry drains our energy making us feel tired most of the time. We become restless. We develop difficulty sleeping or remaining asleep.

Sometimes our fears worsen all because we do not wish to face them. This is especially true of matters which we shouldn't really fear. We become afraid of things that cannot really harm us. But we have to realize that whenever we fear something, we grant it power over us. And the more we avoid it, the worse the fear gets. In such a situation, we have to challenge our beliefs by facing our fear head on. In so doing, we may prove to ourselves that there is really nothing to fear.

Fear is all about not wanting to lose control. One way to handle our fears is to give up the notion that we are always in control. Worrying about what may happen does not guarantee a better tomorrow; it only ensures that today will be more miserable. Therefore, we need to acknowledge the possibility that we will sometimes be powerless to change whatever circumstances arise and just accept whatever happens. Sometimes, we merely have to let things proceed naturally and just let go.

Recognizing Our Breaking Point



The pressure has been building up for a while now. The things we have to do seem to be piling on top of one another. The confusion over conflicting choices is becoming unbearable. Frustrations are occurring one after the other. The mounting distress over the situation invades our thoughts constantly. And the emotional turmoil has begun to affect how we function each day.

How do we know when we have reached our limit? Inability to sleep, irritability, lack of focus, and getting sick for no apparent reason – these may be signs that we are already at the breaking point. Failing to recognize this, will most certainly lead to catastrophic consequences. And allowing this to continue may cause things to spin out of control.

It usually takes someone else to notice that we are no longer acting the way we normally do. Therefore, it helps to have someone around to tell us whether or not there are obvious changes in our behavior. The problem arises when despite having realized that we have reached

our threshold, we continue head on with everything we are doing. We resort to denial and tell ourselves we can manage and that we are still in control.

Many of us possess this misguided tendency. One reason for this is we have been told repeatedly that we need to believe we can handle it and to just be patient. But the truth of it is, we are still only human. Our strength has limits. We are not built to carry a tremendous amount of burdens. The mind can only take so much before it finally splinters.

We should not let things get this far. To avoid this breaking point, we should refrain from taking on too many responsibilities. We need to keep our stressors to a minimum. Once in a while we have to take a step back, look at the situation and ask ourselves whether everything that we are doing is worth the strain. If not, then we ought to choose happiness over stress. And in so doing, we might even live a longer and more fulfilling life.

Greater Than Our Imperfections



To be human, is to be imperfect. We are all flawed, frail and prone to error. This is our undeniable nature. And this adds to the uniqueness of each person. But how do these imperfections affect us?

Insecurities result from the inadequacies we perceive in ourselves. We may feel insecure about our physical attributes, our intellectual ability our achievements, our material wealth and so on. Sometimes, the manner by which we act, think and feel is affected by these insecurities. Often, their effect is detrimental. Consequently, our confidence and self-esteem may suffer hindering our ability to function optimally.

But we must realize that we are not the sum total of our imperfections. Rather, it is how we use our potentials that defines us. We should not allow our insecurities to negatively influence our lives. Instead, we should either accept them or find ways to overcome them. In fact, some of us are able to use these inadequacies as motivation to achieve success in varied ways.

It is inevitable for us to seek the affections of a partner who will make us feel complete. Relationships are built between two imperfect individuals. By accepting each other's flaws, romantic partners are able to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, thereby creating a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. As a result, partners are able to make each other feel more secure in spite of these imperfections. The peace of mind that couple's experience hinges upon the security they give each other within the relationship.

To be human, not only requires that we see our imperfections, but that we also embrace them, rise above them and accept the imperfections of others.

Escaping One's Past



We all commit mistakes. There are myriad reasons why they happen. And when they do, all we want is to put our mistakes behind us. Sometimes we even attempt to erase them from memory.

Yet there will always be reminders of our faults. Each mistake brings with it social consequences. Like ripples in a pond, the people around us are affected as well. Every so often it's the people in our midst who will not allow us to forget. Especially when our mistakes involve having wronged others, those we have hurt find it difficult to pardon us.

It's not an easy thing to admit having done something wrong. We usually have to wrestle with our pride in order to do so. And it's the resulting guilt that makes it extremely taxing. Sometimes all we want is to forget our transgressions. But merely forgetting them may result in their repetition. In order to move forward, we need to accept our mistakes, learn from them and struggle to avoid them in the future.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

