

# Dare to Dream

And then to act!

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## Happiness – Oh, sure!

I recently attended the Happiness Conference in Sydney. There was much to enjoy and a lot to ponder. For me, the most helpful information was the distinction between happiness as pleasure, fun or enjoyment; and happiness as an enduring state of "subjective wellbeing" that prevails in us regardless of circumstances. Seems obvious doesn't it? Yet that distinction is seldom clear. Buying the next tech toy, new car, latest clothes or even house or holiday should certainly make us happy but that happiness doesn't last. Boredom or dissatisfaction soon sets in and we're back onto the roundabout searching for the next fix of happiness/pleasure. By all means, let's enjoy these things, but we should remember that they *cannot* provide subjective well-being. If we expect true happiness from them we'll be sadly disappointed and then wonder if happiness exists at all! Instead, start noticing what brings feelings of peace, contentment, love or joy. Pay attention to the thoughts associated with these feelings, they exist in us, not in the seeming generator of the feelings. Once we know what they are, whenever we want to have those feelings again, we can take a few minutes to recall those thoughts and images and re-live that happiness. In time, we can be there more often than not and enduring happiness can start to prevail in us. In addition to that, there's that occasional inexpressible gift of grace, rising unbidden and unannounced, that breathtaking surge of love that takes us by surprise – perhaps the very pinnacle of joy!

## Emotional Self-Regulation

I've been reading Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence At Work* and he describes the biochemical cascades that we experience as emotions (especially stress-related ones) and the many benefits of developing what he calls emotional self-regulation. He recommends learning methods to reset the brain trigger that started the cascade. Imagine this: your brain sets off an alarm in response to a perceived threat to your welfare (which may or may not be legitimate, may or may not be conscious) yelling for immediate action. You quickly realise that this is a false alarm and use whatever method you know to switch it off and reset it so that your body can release the appropriate "antidote" response, bringing your system smoothly back to equilibrium in record time. As many of you will know, the science behind the *Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)* is being explored by researchers in several disciplines. I'm not one of them! But it seems to me that *EFT* does exactly this. It's as if it interrupts the electro-chemical reaction and resets the alarm so that the executive, conscious parts of the brain can quickly regain supremacy. A handy tool for emotional self-regulation!



## Cosmic Quip

*Looking into our minds and changing them is not some moralistic idea; it's a practical thing. It's because you want to be happy and not suffer.... Being in control of our own thoughts, feelings, responses is possible – but it's not an easy job.*

*Ven. Robina Courtin*

## Flounder or Flourish?

I don't know about you, but my garden's looking good at the moment, and that gives me such pleasure. It started me thinking about the idea of human flourishing and I realised that we give much more attention to "coping" with the so-called realities of life; needing to develop hardiness and resilience etc. But, do you say to your beloved plants "Well, there's a drought on and you'll just have to cope as best you can. I'll give you a bit of fertiliser and a handful of mulch then you're on your own. Get flowering!?" Any good gardener would tell you that you have to provide plants with what they need, when they need it if you want them to be at their best. We generally don't do that for ourselves though. Naturally, there's a difference between indulgence and the enrichment that fosters potential. It seems to me, that if we aim to provide ourselves with an inner environment that encourages flourishing (*you know what you need*) – and do the same for those we care about – then we'd all be the better for it.



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