

## LIVING WITH OUR CONTRADICTIONS – COVID 19 (PART 5)



The four previous articles in this series have generated an incredible amount of positive feedback – clearly the majority of you have found the contents, the suggestions and meditation/affirmation templates very useful.

The articles have also raised questions and queries and the most common theme coming through has been how to deal with the internal tug of war between positive and negative thoughts and feelings. Many individuals, whilst striving to be positive, are still finding they are conflicted – and are struggling to maintain equilibrium.

We said in article 4, that if we are to prevent a mental health epidemic and even worse pandemic, then we **must** give as much attention to our mental well-being as to our physical needs. From the evidence we are seeing, a significant number of people are feeling overwhelmed and for some this is creating feelings of disquietude, despair and even self-loathing.

As a result, the focus of this piece is on how to live with our contradictions and how to manage the internal turmoil. It's easy to say that it's important to be positive and we need to change our self-talk, but it's not always easy to turn down the volume on the negative chatter, that part of us that undermines and sabotages our best efforts.

At this time of restriction on our movement and freedom, this internal turmoil has been exacerbated as the circumstances have forced so many to look at those parts of themselves that are less palatable.

As part of your mental health hygiene programme, learning how to deal with this internal tension gives you access to an incredible sense of peace and contentment.

### **So, how do we do this?**

Firstly, we need to better understand the factors that create the internal tension. The more we can improve our awareness in this area, the more likely we are to break free of what binds us.

Most of us are disturbed and at times tormented by our contradictions, which generate many fears and doubts. These contradictions also tether us to our regrets and feelings of guilt. We do our best to

hide these tormentors for fear of being found out. As a result, we consciously, but mostly unconsciously, carry feelings of inadequacy and shame.

The terrible thing about this burden is that it keeps us trapped in the lie that we are fundamentally flawed, not good enough and beyond repair. We learn to paper over the cracks with denials and justifications; we inadvertently become imposters, living in perpetual hope that our pretence will not be unveiled.

The secret to living with your contradictions is embracing things as they are. This leads to acceptance – and it is this acceptance that creates healing and transformation. Let us explain how this works...

There are parts of all of us that are more developed, competent and aware and there are other parts that are less evolved, immature and in some cases damaged – it's these parts of us that drive our negative patterns and habits. These are the aspects we tend to hide away, even from ourselves; and in hiding them they do much more harm. Carl Jung quite accurately said that, "we can't heal that which we conceal". Hiding these undesirable bits continues to give them power over us.

A far more productive way to move forward is to face and acknowledge those less evolved parts of ourselves with kindness and compassion. These bits do not need our negative judgment. They need us to view them with 'kind eyes.'

What this means in practice is acknowledging it is okay that you have less developed traits and attributes. This doesn't make you less human or less worthy. When we accept those damaged, broken bits, they can heal and transform into something more beautiful.

This is because acceptance releases the energy that is bound up in the tug of war between the better parts of the self and the wounded self and that energy can then be used to create a more positive, uplifting state of being. Acceptance sends out the message to the wounded self, 'you're okay and we can move forward together'. The negative energy softens and changes, through the feelings of acceptance and kindness.

The aim of this approach is to establish a peace treaty, a promise not to keep finding fault with yourself, a pledge to stop condemning yourself. When you accept your lack of evolution and/or damage, you no longer undermine your own progress. Now, both the lesser and the greater parts of yourself work collaboratively and tirelessly to create the very best version of you.

Learning how to live with your contradictions is such a beautiful way to find peace and contentment because you can let go of the idea that it is only when things are perfect, 'just so', that you can find peace of mind. This simply isn't true – we can, in fact, find contentment in the disruptive tides of contradiction... if we choose to visit the welcoming shores of acceptance.

Here's a useful meditation template, which illustrates how you can foster an alliance between the healthy aspects of the self and the wounded parts of the self. Please, when reading this, do it slowly and mindfully, to achieve the best outcome.

### **Living with ambivalence**

I stop and listen... and can hear the inner chatter of criticism, doubt and negative judgement... I've grown tired of the way it makes me feel... it encourages me to maintain my many disguises... in the hope I'll never be found out... but I now know this denies me access to the truth about myself... I am not this negative stream of consciousness... I am much more than this...

It's time to walk the road of acceptance... and something deep inside of me says I can do it... I can accept those parts of me that are not yet healed, resolved or even as aware as I'd like them to be... I accept that I still fall short in some areas of my life and that's okay... this does not define me... it only tells a part of my story... and as I accept my shortfalls, I am able to write the story of my choosing...

In fact, I find that when I accept and embrace the wounded parts of me, I become more understanding of the whole... It's time to broker a truce between the damaged and broken bits and the bits I feel more comfortable with... I increasingly understand that I am a work in progress and mistakes are inevitable... and so getting things wrong is more easily accepted... the need to hide and cower before my nemesis, shame, falls away...

I worry less about how I am perceived by others... I move beyond my limitations... and when I feel unable to, that's okay too... by accepting that which has created distaste in me, the negative energy begins to wane... my self-loathing becomes self-care... I find compassion for myself grows and any feelings of condemnation fade... I enjoy this feeling of being happy with the way I am right now...

There's such a wonderful sense of peace in this place... accepting my ambivalence is the best way forward... I give thanks for this discovery... I now promise to keep moving forward with kind eyes... negative judgement has no value... I understand that change comes most easily through compassion... this leaves me with an overwhelming sense of peace...

Try this exercise for at least three weeks. We are pretty sure that at the end of this period you will want to continue with this practice, as it will build a culture of compassion and kindness within, creating a safe haven. The latest cognitive neuroscience research tells us that practising a positive mental exercise for around 12 minutes, over a period of 21 days, begins to make structural changes to the way we think.

At this point in time we all need to find ways of creating an oasis of peace. Learning to live with your contradictions is a powerful way to achieve this, because it liberates you from the feeling that you are not good enough. As a result, your energy is no longer wasted on internal conflict, allowing you to focus on the best in you.

In the last article we spoke about positive silence and we made the point that silence is not the absence of sound. Even silence has a sound of its own. How many times have you been quiet but there's a cacophony of noise creating a disturbance in your soul? There's no silence in that place. In fact, there's the relentless sound of how awful it is to be there.

Even in the state of bliss, where the mind is high on the most noble of thoughts, immersed in the most beautiful images and experiences, there is still a sound, it's a vibration of peace, love and contentment that flows through one's being, like a gentle breeze on a warm summer's day. This is positive silence.

Here's another example of how you can create positive silence. As we've previously suggested, work out the best way for you to interact with these affirmations. Otherwise, they are merely words on a page.

## **Acceptance sets us free**

I sit with and lovingly accept my wounded self... and that acceptance creates ripples of peace within my being...

Acceptance is a catalyst for positive change... it transforms negative energy into positive energy...

Acceptance creates the conditions for me to grow out of my mistakes, hurts and misfortunes...

My feelings of distaste slowly evaporate... and I can now see the jewel of benefit in all my experiences...

My self-condemnation becomes kindness and compassion...

Feelings of mercy and forgiveness rise to the surface of my mind...

I now see myself with kind eyes... kind eyes enable me to see the whole picture... and I am no longer deceived...

My inner critic seeks out the virtue and the benefit in all situations...

I lovingly embrace the less desirable parts of myself and watch them change and grow...

As I accept the wounded parts, I feel a warmth and tenderness growing in me... and I am strengthened...

The external noise of the world is diminished by my positive recital... as peace begins to resonate within my soul...

I am now enjoying the power of positive silence... and contentment and joy accompany me on my journey...

I'm reminded each day that serenity is not freedom from the storm but peace within it...

I promise to spend some time each day practising self-compassion...

I find things to love and appreciate about myself every day...

Acceptance sets me free...

Even if you never undertake another personal development task, but take one of these journeys regularly, you'll find that peace and contentment will turn up at your door.

For those of you who may need further persuasion on the merits of compassion for the self, there's a lot of very good research out there underlining how transformative kindness can be. You may want to explore the work of Professor Paul Gilbert, Dr. David Hamilton, Emma Seppala and Matthieu Ricard, to name a few.

