

Special Edition

Life... Emotional Responses to 9/11/2001

Dear Friends,

Several people have called, some have emailed me regarding their continuing reactions to the events that happened September 11th in New York and Washington, DC. For that reason I am choosing to post this Special Edition of *What Do I Do When* on question/answer format.

How can I use the secure thought "distressing but not dangerous" to help calm me down at a time like this?

Looking at your situation realistically, if you are not in a direct dangerous rescue attempt in either NY or DC, where you are is distressing, but not dangerous to you. In fact you could go as far as to use the secure thought that the tragic events were distressing, not dangerous to you.

The key here is to add two words to personalize the standard secure thought. As I repeat the phrase to myself it sounds like this: This is distressing, not dangerous to me. To me! It is not dangerous to me. I am safe. I am safe in my home, in my city. Right now I am safe! If I am safe at this moment, I am not in danger.

Yes, the events were dangerous to the people who were directly affected. Yes, the rescue workers face potential realistic dangers in searching through the rubble. Where I am, *right this minute*, I am safe.

What about me putting my mental health first at a time like this? That seems selfish when so many people have died.

Putting your mental health first, keeping it as your first and foremost goal, is never selfish. Never, ever selfish!

Making your well-being your top priority does not make you uncaring. It does not make you unpatriotic. Keeping your mental health at the top of your list is healthy for you, and for everyone around you.

Let's say I become consumed with grief and feel really, really bad that all those people died. Will the grief I feel make anything better? Will my feeling bad help those who died? No. Will it help their families? No. Will it help me stay functioning at a high level?

I'm not saying we shouldn't grieve. I'm saying that we're better off if we don't allow the events and grief to consume us.



I can't understand why this tragedy happened?

Trying to figure out the "why" of most things that happen in our outer world is a direct route to frustration. The frustration then causes tension, and our tension creates symptoms. In this case the only realistic thought we can have is "I don't know." Because we truly don't know the why. We don't have access to what was going on in the terrorists minds.

We have to stick with what we do have control over: our thoughts and our actions.

The more I read and listen to the news - the more tense I get, especially when it comes to mis-reporting. First I heard one thing, then something else which contradicts the first report.

Mis-reporting is average in times when emotions are high and the media is attempting to report the very most "up to the second" news. They are doing their best given the circumstances.

Once upon a time I was quoted in an article and the reporter had never contacted me. Imagine my surprise when I read about what I was supposed to have said. Now, when I read something in print – especially when there is any kind emotion and judgement involved, unless I've heard the person say it in person or on tape/video, I take it with a grain of salt. In other words, I do not accept a statement as the absolute truth. It could be true, it might be false. I don't know, and I choose not to get angry or upset about it, or take sides.

I'm so mad, I feel that we should go out and cause the same destruction to them.

If we go back and look for the very root of what caused the destruction, the root emotion was anger. In my mind, the perpetrators took action because of their anger. Getting angry back, is not going to solve anger.

So what do you think we ought to do?

I don't have an answer for what "we" should do. I can only share what I am going to do - continue to project the energy of Peace to the entire world. How do you project Peace? You can do that through prayer, if that's your choice. You can do it by envisioning people interacting with each other in Peace. You can do it by acting with Peace in your every day life.

At the back of Peace of Body, Peace of Mind I included the lyrics to the Peace Song, it's very, very special to me. My favorite line is: "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." Further along is the sentence: "Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now..."

Let this be the moment now...that statement reminds me that in *every* moment, in *every* interaction with another human being, I can *choose*. I can choose peace, or I can choose any number of levels of unrest.

The greatest tribute we can make to our fellow man is to choose to live our individual lives in peace. We can practice peace everywhere – in our homes, at work, in school, in traffic – where ever we are and with whoever is in our little corner of the world.



I was on a plane that landed in DC at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday. Things were pretty chaotic for a while. Yesterday my neighbor said: You're lucky that your plane didn't get shot out of the air. Of course that made me upset. How can I respond to negative comments like this?

If someone told me that a plane I was on "could" have been shot down, I would smile my best smile and simply respond with: "Wow, isn't it wonderful that it wasn't, and that I'm safe and sound."

What about the concept of trivialities?

When death or destruction are involved, an event is not trivial. Perhaps this huge incident will give us something to measure against. Maybe we'll be able to see more clearly that what happens to us in our daily lives really is of no major significance. Maybe we can see more clearly that waiting in line, missing a bus, getting stuck in traffic, having someone say something you don't like... maybe now we'll be able to see those small incidents for what they really are: NBD's - No Big Deals.

I think this stuff is really evil and so are those people who are behind it. What do you think?

Personally, I believe that there is only one presence and one power in the universe - God the good. You can call that entity God, The Universe, Divine Energy, Spirit, or any other name that you choose. Most religions teach the omnipresence of the Life Force - meaning God or this Supreme Energy is everywhere present.

I choose to take that literally. In my belief system, those who act contrary, those who terrorize, are personally separated from this Divine Force (though not completely, if they were completely disconnected they would literally not be alive).

In my belief system there are not opposing forces – good and evil. There is only one Force. And, there are those of us who are connected and those of us who aren't. There are those of us who are more connected and those of us who are less connected.

How can you be so calm during all of this? I don't think that's natural or average!

I've got 20 years experience changing my thoughts. I know what actions are good for me, and which are not. If I stayed glued to the TV, read all the articles and "pass along" type emails that came across my desk relating to September 11th I would be sabotaging my overall state of health – that means my physical health, my mental health and my spiritual health.

So I choose to not give in to my impulses to turn on the TV, not give in to the impulses to go online to see what I can find out. I control my impulses by commanding my muscles. If I scan an email that appears to have something in it that I don't want to read, I delete it, *immediately*. At first it wasn't easy, though I have to say that as the days go by, it is getting easier and easier. In fact, the "I've got to know" syndrome is the point to where "I don't have to know." Which show you what concerted effort and practice can do for you.

I am calm because I *choose* to do what *makes* me calm and *keeps* me calm. As to your comment about being calm not being average, there are plenty of people who have managed to stay that way. You just haven't had personal contact with them. I have. I



have a whole circle of friends and acquaintances who have remained calm, rational, and normal because they knew what was best for themselves and they did those things.

It's being self-lead rather than event-lead. Another way of putting it, is that they were inner-lead instead of being outer-lead.

Peace, Love and Joy,
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