

MIND MANAGEMENT

Week #1 of the 3-Week Series, "Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess"

June 19, 2022

With Rev. Richard Maraj

So a German Shepherd, Doberman and a cat die, and they're at the Pearly Gates. God asks them each a question. The question was, "*What do you believe in?*"

So the German Shepherd said, "*I believe in discipline, training and loyalty to my master.*"

And God said, "*Good! You come and sit on my right side.*" And he says, "*Doberman, what do you believe?*"

And the Doberman says, "*I believe in love, care and protecting my master.*"

And God said, "*Ah, good. Come sit on my left side.*" And then God looks at the cat and says, "*What do you believe?*"

And the cat says, "*I believe you're sitting in my seat.*" [Drummer does rimshot drumroll] [Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh]

You know I was reading an article this week that says people perceive cats as being aloof and mysterious and arrogant. And the reason is because we can't tell what cats are thinking. We can't tell what's on their mind. And there are scientists who are actually studying what cats think and what's in a cat's mind. And I'm thinking, "*Are we crazy?*" You know why? Because we need to find out what we're thinking in our own minds! I think sometimes we just don't know what's going on inside even ourselves.

You know, I think we would all agree 100% that the creative power of our minds is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. Think how powerful our minds are! The ability to think; the ability to imagine; the ability to dream; to see unlimited possibilities; to focus; to set goals and our intentions; to ask; to choose; to decide; to affirm. I mean, our minds are absolutely powerful and almost unlimited in how creative and what good we can attract in our lives and in ourselves.

You know, the mind is the source of creative energy, if you think about it. And we generate and send forth energy through our minds through our thoughts; through our feelings; and through our choices. And we can intentionally use this power of our mind to attract and manifest and create things.

However, the mind and the power of our thoughts are always working, and whatever we put in our mind -- and whatever we hold in our thoughts -- will attract more of itself. So we need to be careful how we use and what we put in our thoughts and in our own minds.

You know, as great as our minds are, how many people would say you don't always hold the most positive thoughts? [Congregation titters] As great as our minds are, sometimes we don't always think as lovingly or as prosperously and as wonderfully as we could think.

I mean, how many people have ever had your mind distracted, or so preoccupied you couldn't really focus on anything? Anybody have that experience? Anybody ever can't stop your mind because you're so worried, stressed and anxious? Anybody ever have worries, stress and being anxious? How many of you ever had your mind just filled with negativity and fearful thoughts? I mean, I think every one of us! Ever had a time where it felt like your mind was so busy and crazy you thought, "*My life is just a mess!*" Anybody ever have that feeling? Or, "*My relationship's a mess!*"? Or, "*My finances are a mess!*"? Or just, "*Myself is a mess!*"?

You know, I heard people use that expression: "a hot mess." I didn't know what exactly it meant. I knew it wasn't favorable. [Congregation laughs] So I decided to look up the definition. Here's two definitions of "hot mess."

"A hot mess is a person or thing that is spectacularly unsuccessful" [congregation laughs] or spectacularly disorganized." That's the first one.

The second says, *"A hot mess is an attractive person" -- hot -- "who continually engages in situations that negatively impact them socially, mentally and societally."*

You know, we all feel like a mess; we all make messes. And they always all originate in what we're thinking; what we're putting into our minds. That when we are putting thoughts of lack, thoughts of fear, thoughts of unworthiness, thoughts of negativity, it creates frustration and pain, unhappiness and unfulfillment. But even worse, if we continue it, it creates toxic thinking and rigidity of mind that keeps us stuck in levels of depression and anxiety and levels of hopelessness and powerlessness. And it actually affects our health and our well-being, if we do not manage and carefully be aware of what we're putting into our minds, and what kind of thoughts that we are actually thinking.

But here's the good news. We can clean up those messes! No matter how messed up our thinking has been; no matter how negative it's been; no matter how unhealthy our thought patterns or feelings of lack and unworthiness have been, that we literally can clean up our mess and create something greater and happier and more fulfilling.

How do we do it? Well, the Apostle Paul said it this way. He said, *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* He's saying don't conform to the same patterns that you've been stuck in all this time.

I think I've mentioned this before. Do you know that 95% of what you think today you thought yesterday! Are we surprised why he's saying don't conform to the same patterns of thinking? And he said, *"But be transformed by the renewing of your minds."* Be transformed; use the power of your mind to create something new; to create something better; to eliminate the unhealthy and attract something more happy and fulfilling.

So today we're going to start a three-week series called, "How to Clean Up Your Mental Mess." And it really is a series that is about learning how to use the power of your mind and the power of your thoughts more wisely, more positively, and more effectively so we can bring forth more happiness or joy or peace or fulfillment or inspiration.

You know, people always talk about time management; we need better time management. No! It's mind management. You get down to it, that is the thing that affects the quality of our lives: is how well do we manage our minds.

Scale of 1 to 10, how good are you at managing your mind currently? I'll be every one of us has some room there to be more effective in the way that we manage our minds.

So today we're going to look at three things -- the first three foundational things -- because this is going to be a three-week series that will build upon itself. The three things we can do to better manage our mind.

The first one is to **UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THE TENDENCIES AND IDIOSYNCRACIES OF HAVING A HUMAN MIND.** Remember when Paul said, *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind?"* Do you know why he said that? The obvious one is, yes, to show how powerful our minds are. But it's also to show the other thing: is that our minds need renewing a lot. Our minds have a tendency to get distracted. We have a tendency to lose focus. We have a tendency to get a little scattered.

A band called House of Pain had a song called "Jump Around." Jump around! Your mind ever just jump around? [Congregation laughs] The Buddhists call it "monkey mind." Like, your mind just jumps from one branch to another, swinging. We get distracted often.

Anybody ever meditate and have your mind wander all over the place? [Congregation laughs] Ever been in a class and you start daydreaming? I mean, you want to be doing this, but our minds just start going everywhere!

And the thing is: This is not unique to your mind. This is a part and function of having a human mind. It's just a part of the deal that we have to work through.

Let me give you some other tendencies. The human mind has a tendency to focus on negatives. We tend to focus on what we don't have; what we don't want; what we don't like; and what isn't working in our lives.

I did a little research on this. You know why human beings tend to like and gravitate a little more to negativity than positivity? Because negativity stimulates more parts of your brain, so it almost stimulates and attracts that energy. It's almost like a "rush" -- an addictive rush of negativity. Not that it can't be overcome, but it is a tendency that we all seem to have.

And then the third one is: There's a tendency for mental rigidity. Let me put it this way. So we have a mental rigidity practice of thinking, *"If this exact thing doesn't happen, then I won't be happy."* *"If this exact doesn't happen, I will not be successful."* You know, that rigidity expresses in different ways, like being unwilling to let go of the past. We're rigid and we keep holding on to stuff; that's an aspect of rigidity. Judging and condemning is an act of a rigid mind. When our minds get rigid and inflexible, it's hard to see other perspectives and possibilities. We limit and trap ourselves in our own thinking because of this rigid mindset.

And the other one -- and there are way more than this -- but let's just stop at four, because I don't want to get you too depressed. [Congregation laughs] This is an uplifting talk! But the other tendency is: We tend to see lack in the world. *"There's just not enough. There's not enough time; there's not enough money; there's not enough success; there's not enough love."* And then the "not-enoughness" travels to ourselves: that I'm not enough. *"I'm not good enough; not smart enough; not something else enough."*

So these are some of the interesting idiosyncrasies and tendencies that we have of having a human mind. They're just part of the deal.

So I've told you a number of times that I went on a 10-day silent retreat where we meditated -- where we couldn't speak. And we meditated intentionally for 11 hours a day. So you know how your mind wanders when you meditate for two or three minutes? [Congregation laughs] Could you imagine how much your mind wanders in 11 hours

And one of the things that they really taught there was to just relax; the mind wanders! Stop getting so upset about it or angry or blaming yourself or shaming yourself. And I did a little bit of that! I mean, I'm meditating; my mind's wandering. It's like, *"Come on, man! You're a minister, for God's sake!"* [Congregation laughs] *"Get it together!"*

And the thing is: We do this! We get upset at ourselves, and we set ourselves up for failure by not accepting and realizing this is a tendency of having a human mind. And in that meditation thing, when I learned, *"Hey, just relax; that's part of having a human mind,"* it's amazing how the rest of me calmed down. And I didn't freak out. I noticed it more, but I was controlled by it less.

And so the thing about is: Just accept that's a part of the human mind; don't blame yourself. Know you're still responsible for doing your spiritual work. Because we have a human mind and a divine mind. We have a human mind and a God mind, a Christ mind. And our work is to work with this human mind to find a way to allow the divine mind to come through.

You know, our think our minds jumping around and doing these things makes life interesting and challenging. And here's the interesting thing: Our minds and our brains get better when they're challenged. So instead of seeing it as an obstacle, or how horrible our minds are, or how bad we are, it's to see this is a challenge of my life: to see how to bring forth my God mind through my human mind. Even when it wanders, how do I get to a place of relaxing into it so that more Divine can come through me?

I mean, I think it's a powerful and important thing. It's hard, but we have to keep doing it. I always say: Golf is a hard thing, but people keep playing! And so the mindset would be like this: *"I have this human*

mind that has a tendency to wander, but I am so blessed to have it. And I will enjoy the challenge of teaching my human mind to give way to my divine mind." And so, if we just relax and not give up or not blame ourselves, it's a really good first step of learning how to manage your mind ... is to understand the tendency of the human mind. Big, huge step. It's a shift in perspective that makes a huge difference.

The next one is to **BE AWARE OF THE UNIQUE PATTERNS OF OUR OWN PERSONAL MIND.** You know, when it says, *"Do not conform to the patterns,"* it's saying don't stay stuck where your mind is. And the only way to not stay stuck where your mind is, is to know where your mind is. To improve our lives, you have to know where you are right now.

What are the thoughts you are thinking now? What is the mess and unhealthy mental patterns that are going on now that we can fix and heal and improve? And the only way to get clear about them is to ask questions. And really the healthiest thing is to write them down. I'll tell you more about that in a second.

Here are some of the questions for us to ask to figure out what's really going on in our own mind and in our own thinking. What are the most positive things that you think about yourself, about life and other people? What are the most negative thoughts that you think about yourself, about life and other people? What are the most negative words that you tend to use about yourself, about your situation and others? What are the things that trigger you feeling angry or sad or hurt or abandoned? Where in your life do you feel like a mess? And what is it that you would really like to clean up right now? Where in your life do you feel most vulnerable? Where in your life do you struggle the most? Where in your life do you feel powerless? What in your life do you worry the most about? Where in your life do you feel stuck or lost or hopeless? And if there's one thing you could change about how your mind works, what would it be? Or what it thinks? What would it be?

And here's the deal: if we're really serious, we need to write this stuff down. I used to never like journaling at all. But I started doing it because my brother started doing it. And I found how liberating it was. You know, journaling does two things: it releases and it reveals.

I find when I'm a little overwhelmed and I journal about whatever it is going on, when I write it down it's less overwhelming than when it's in my head. See, in my head it feels all scary and overwhelming. When I write it down, it feels more manageable.

And the other thing: it reveals. One of the patterns in the meditation, as well as in my writing, is I notice certain things keep coming up over and over again. And sometimes we will be surprised. It's like, *"I didn't realize I thought that way. I didn't realize I held on to those types of thoughts."*

This is the kind of work we need to do if we're really serious about transforming: using our minds to transform our lives and to better manage our minds. And the thing about it: you just accept it. This is good information. It's not to shame, blame or judge ourselves, because this is how we are. It's just how we are! It's good, important information to help us improve and move forward.

You know, I think acceptance is awareness without judgement. That's what true acceptance is: is to be aware of something, but not judge it. So whatever it is -- that we feel wounded, or we think some irrational thought, or hate ourselves, or whatever -- it's good information to help us.

And so I think the important thing is: When we're not aware, we create bigger messes mentally in our lives. And when we are aware, it's the first step to liberation, and the first step to transformation.

And so, over the next few weeks, here's three things we're going to do in transforming our mind. Number one: We're going to work on transforming the general thought patterns that we have about ourselves and others. The general thoughts and things we say. Next week we'll look at having our mind create a new vision, or a new narrative of what we tell ourselves about ourselves. And then, in our third week, is: How do you create a mind to be prepared to handle the challenges and difficulties and adversity of life?

That's what we're going to do over the next three weeks. But it requires writing. It requires honesty and awareness to one's self, so we can know where we are to figure out how we can get better. How we can get further and create greater things.

So understanding the tendencies of the human mind, and accepting it, but then also understanding and being aware of the unique things that are going on in our own mind that require honesty and some writing.

The final one is to EMPOWER YOUR MIND POWER. Twenty-something years ago, I went to see Neale Donald Walsch. How many people have heard of Neale Donald Walsch? Ever read any Neale Donald Walsch's books? He was speaking in Kansas City; he spoke for three hours. I don't remember a thing he said! [Congregation laughs] Three hours! Except one thing, and here's the one thing. He said the worst thought you could ever think is to think that you have no power to change or improve your own life. Because it is 100% not true!

But how often do we accept it, do we buy it, do we believe it and live out of that life? That I don't have the power to change my own life? How many times do we think: *"Oh, I'm stuck this way; this'll never get better. This is as good as it gets ... or it's going to get even worse from here."* We have that belief on some level: that we're not powerful. That we're not capable. That we don't have the ability to change or transform. And that's not true!

In Timothy, one of my favorite Scriptures, it says this line: *"God has not given you a spirit of fear or timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline."* Paul said, *"I can do all things through God, who strengthens me."*

Do either of those sound like you're powerless? Incapable? Unfortunately, we mentally get conditioned to believe that we're powerless. And that's one of the biggest mental messes we need to clean up! Is to buy into this idea that we have no power; it's absolutely not true!

In Genesis, it says, *"You have been given dominion and authority over all things."* You know what the biggest thing is? It's your own thinking. Your own feelings. And your own choices that you make.

Science shows something very interesting. It's that, when you know and believe that you have the power to choose or to change or to create, you actually feel better mentally and physically. That the more empowered you feel, the more likely you are to use the power of your mind. That when you believe you have the power -- even if you don't have the answers! If you just believe you have the power and the resources to move through this -- that *"God and I can handle this situation"* -- that our level of empowerment and the use of our mind becomes more and more effective. We use it more consciously and intentionally.

So here are two practices we're going to do that are empowerment practices for managing your mind. Number one you're going to know, because it's my favorite one, and I think it's the most important. And that is: At least three to five times a day, practice quieting your mind. Getting to the place of being still.

Because two things happen. When you immerse your mind in the mind of God, you know what happens to the things that are not of God? They just fall away. You don't have to do anything. Because when you're more immersed in God, you attract anything of God, and anything not of God just falls away.

And the second thing: Quietening and calming the mind opens a way for ideas and inspiration and peace and the healing of our old unhealthy thought patterns. And so that's an important thing: quiet the mind.

Eric Butterworth uses the line, *"When you quiet the mind, you center with God, and you open a way for the imprisoned splendor to come forth."* But that can't happen until you're quiet, because you open a space to allow it to come forth.

And the second one is to use the power of intention. Nothing happens without intention. Intention begins to shift and move things. So what would be your intention for the kind of mind you would like to build? Or the kind of mind you would like to improve or make more effective? Would it be to have a

more loving mind? A patient mind? A kinder mind? A more grateful mind? A more confident mind? A more worthy mind? A more joyful mind? If you had to think three things of building a new mind -- of setting a new intention for you to be more effective in how you use your mind -- what would those things be?

The Apostle Paul said, *"Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you."* And so what that is saying is that you have the ability, even with this human mind that jumps around, you have the ability through your divine mind to join and unify your mind with the mind of God. But it takes work.

You know, every one of us, I bet, would like to do one meditation, do three or four affirmations and badda bing, badda boom! The life's changed! [Congregation laughs] Well, guess what? Some of these unhealthy thought patterns have been with us for decades. So if we're actually serious about, it does require this level of work, this level of intention, this level of practice.

And so here's the homework that I really want to encourage you in, and I'm going to do myself. Number one is to understand the tendency of the human mind: the tendency of the mind to wander. Don't blame; just accept yourself. And take on the challenge that, *"I have this human mind, and it wanders a bit, but I'm blessed to have it, and I'm going to take on the challenge -- enjoy using it to bring forth my divine mind and spiritual mind."*

The second one is: Be aware of your patterns. Be honest with yourself. And journal; write them down. Just practicing writing them down makes you aware and starts liberating you from them to be transformed.

And the final one is to empower your mind power by knowing that you're powerful and amazing. That you can do great things! And practice by quieting your mind and setting your intentions.

The quality of our life depends on the quality of our minds. We can transform our lives in great ways, but are you willing to learn and practice the tools of good mind management?

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]

Copyright 2022 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Maraj