

## Part IV

# A MOOD- BALANCING WAY OF LIFE

If error is corrected  
whenever it is recognized  
as such, the path of error  
is the path of truth.

—Hans Reichenbach

**E**ven though you follow the biochemical program, if you continue habitual negative thought patterns you will seriously undermine this treatment. Persistent negative attitudes can lead to constriction and bondage, whereas consistent positive thoughts and expectations create expansion and freedom. Someone has said we suffer because we don't see things as *they* are, but as *we* are. Our perceptions are influenced more by our inner world than by the world around us, by our expectations and our "selective focusing."

I can remember marveling at this phenomenon when I was young. For when I decided to selectively notice Chevrolets on the road, it seemed they were everywhere; when I counted the number of overweight people, I could hardly find any slender ones; or, when I drove, trying to avoid jostling my sick mother, a street which had always seemed smooth suddenly had endless bumps. It was as if Chevys, fat people and bumps in the road suddenly materialized when I decided to notice them.

Likewise, if I wake up in the morning saying, "Today is a terrible day," I will selectively seek out and focus on all that supports this position. On the

other hand, if I get out of bed eager to greet the day, anticipating interesting, enjoyable experiences, I will be able to find and create them in my day—no matter what lies before me.

We can only learn to see differently by wanting to see differently. We can only unlearn errors in thought and action by replacing them with correct, mood-balancing thought and action. This section presents formulas to help you do this.

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## Improving Mental Habits and Life-styles

**B**efore you can eliminate low moods and depression from your life, you need to decide whether you think it is possible for you. If you believe you can be helped, then you will be more willing to follow whatever path is necessary to create a harmonious and balanced life.

A good treatment will work to some degree regardless of your expectations. For instance, penicillin will attack your strep throat whether you believe in it or not. But your beliefs can facilitate a good treatment, making the healing even faster and more complete. Your beliefs can also modify and interfere with the treatment. If you feel the penicillin is poisoning you or won't help you at all—even if you take it, it may be less effective or you may develop a negative reaction to it.

Do you believe that the nutrition program will change your unhealthy patterns? Do you feel you can follow the program? Do you believe it will help you? The answers to these questions can tell you right now how much you are likely to benefit.

It's natural that the more you experience low moods, the more you expect to respond with additional low moods. The nutrient program can interfere

with that cycle by changing your brain chemistry, but the treatment will work much better if you go into it really expecting results.

Even though we may feel that we will follow the program and be benefited, our subconscious expectations may conflict with our conscious desires. If you have difficulty believing you can feel good most of the time, if you have difficulty creating positive expectations for yourself, or if you are sabotaged by your subconscious beliefs, you may need to reprogram your thinking. This is important so that your thoughts do not feed depression and so that your brain biochemistry can do the maximum good work. Otherwise you will keep stressing yourself and having to restart the treatment.

## HOW TO REPROGRAM YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND

To reprogram your conscious mind, you must examine and then eliminate negative thoughts about yourself, your world and your future. Stay alert and when you slip, immediately replace the idea with an opposite and positive word, thought or mental picture. Say the correcting statement out loud when possible. For instance, if you find yourself thinking, "I'm so bored, I don't know what to do," you would instead cut off the thought literally in the middle. Make your mind shout over the top of it. Say something like, "My life is full of interesting, stimulating activities." Or, if that phrase doesn't work for you, find one that does. You'll probably initially resist, because you'll say, "But what I'm saying isn't true, because I really *am* bored." That isn't the point. We tend to believe and incorporate what we think and hear over and over again, and, therefore, we must break the negative chain of thoughts by learning and practicing

more constructive ones. If I have to walk five miles and I repeatedly say, "I'm so tired I can't make it," my performance and the entire experience becomes very much more difficult than if I'm saying, "I'm full of energy and vitality, this is easy for me," or simply, "I can *do* this."

Some people have specific distressing repetitive negative thoughts which they feel helpless to control. If this is so with you, begin by repeating the word "CANCEL" as soon as the first word of that thought enters your head.

Visualization is an even more powerful tool than word statements. After you think of being bored, for example, mentally see yourself engaged in a specific interesting activity: walking down a lane in a fascinating foreign city, watching people dressed in multicolored garments, watching children play, passing by a colorful marketplace—whatever is interesting to you. There are several good books that discuss this technique, one of which is called *Creative Visualization*, by Shakti Gawain.

What I and many others consider to be the most effective structured psychological treatment for depression is what is called cognitive therapy. It specifically teaches you to recognize your distorted perceptions and negative thoughts and to transform each one into its positive counterpart. Once you have developed the negative thought habit it is difficult to recognize it on your own. It may help to ask your family and friends to signal you when they see signs of its recurrence.

If you learn to think positively you change the stress response and help to improve your brain chemistry. For those with chronic depression and habitual negative perceptions, the ideal treatment may be a combination of the nutritional chemical treatment and cognitive therapy.

## SUBCONSCIOUS

If you reprogram your conscious mind, some of the benefits will filter into your subconscious as well. The subconscious is the center of your physical and psychological power and controls all the organic processes of your body. When you are consciously working to change and influence it, you are ready to take charge of yourself.

Subconscious change can be achieved by using a method known as relaxation, or sleep programming. When you are in a totally relaxed state or are asleep, your critical, nonaccepting fixed attitudes and defenses are off guard and you are more open to new input. It is helpful to play tape recordings of corrective positive messages at such times, until you eventually ingrain the new patterns.

There is a list in the appendix of some tapes and books designed to help you develop the skill of thinking and perceiving positively. Generally, they instruct you to play the messages when you go to bed at night, but you can also listen to them anytime you can shut out the world and relax without interruption. If you do this when you retire at night, it doesn't matter whether you fall asleep or not, because your subconscious mind hears the suggestions anyway.

## CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

External changes can also help to improve the way we feel. Be selective about your environment, and change it if necessary so as to expose yourself to uplifting, inspirational and soothing influences.

I can't understand how someone living in a dimly lit, cluttered space with the television blaring day and night, eating sweets, drinking caffeine and alco-

hol, and staying indoors much of the time would not become hopelessly depressed. Rearrange your life so that you receive regular doses of nature, animals, certain movies and plays, books, beautiful art, color, natural light and meditation. Consider joining groups that promote higher purposes and surround yourself with people with whom you can interact to improve your health and feed your soul. Music also has a powerful effect on the emotions. It can heal, balance and harmonize, or it can irritate, aggravate, disturb and depress you. We've all "got a right to sing the blues," but if you are already overwhelmed and struggling with low moods, make it a point to listen to cheerful, mood-balancing, happy, soothing or at least neutral music.

### **SELECT YOUR ACTIVITIES**

Just as you're implementing the nutrient program in this book to adjust your brain chemistry, you might begin to experiment with activity planning as well. We all have experienced mood slumps associated with inactivity. Conversely, it is well known that exercise is often mood elevating. Several studies have now reported the successful treatment of hospitalized depressed persons by eight hours of daily exercise only. Exercise is believed to increase the brain endorphins and probably creates other neurotransmitter changes as well (though most of us will not be able to devote eight hours a day to it).

Not only is physical movement useful, but anything which absorbs your mind and removes it from worrying or engaging in negative thinking will have antidepressant effects. Creative learning experiences are an important part of the necessary life, mind and mood expanding behavioral repertoire. Try classes in



sports, art, music or other interests to improve work-related skills. When our minds are stimulated and our brain cells are firing, the mental activity helps maintain a balanced biochemical environment in our brains. If we are participating in boring, monotonous activities our brain-cell firing slows. A used muscle remains firm and toned, while an unused muscle becomes flabby and wasted. Likewise, it is important that we keep our mental electrochemical pathways in good operating condition to keep them functioning properly.

To see how your activities are affecting your feelings, keep a journal for ten days. Write down the time and a description of all your activities. Rate them as positive, neutral, or negative, by using the following numbers: +3 is very positive, +2 is moderately positive and +1 is slightly positive, 0 is neutral, -1 is slightly negative, -2 is moderately negative and -3 is very negative. Record your moods and the times they occur, using the same numerical scale. At the end of the ten days study the two charts to see how your moods were influenced by what you did. Make it a point to increase the total time you spend in the +2 and +3 activities and to avoid or decrease your time in the mood-disturbing circumstances as much as possible. If most of your activities are on the minus side, you may need to seek further professional guidance for restructuring your life.

## BE HERE NOW

Reading *Be Here Now*, by Baba Ram Dass, several years ago, taught me to discipline myself to remain in the moment as much as possible. Before that, I was future-focused, ahead of myself into what was coming next and missing out on being fully present for

what was actually happening. The best way to prepare for the future is to live fully in the present.

People who are prone to guilt or to condemnation of others are often stuck in the past, dwelling on what they did or didn't do and should have done. Those prone to anxiety tend to be caught up in fearful anticipations about the future, worrying about what will happen if something happens to their spouse, if they run out of money, if the car breaks down, and so on.

This is not to say it is never useful to reflect on the past or to make plans for the future. However, reflection and planning need to be done at specified times and then to be released so that we can enter into the moment. For this, we need the conscious use of our will to direct the functioning of our mind. The Eastern philosophies focus on and provide this mental training far more than do the Western philosophies.

Depressed people, especially, tend to focus on remembering or anticipating negative feelings and events, even changing what really happened or what might happen into something worse than the reality. They seem to savor joylessness.

A young woman came to my office complaining that she was consumed with hurt and anger and had pain in many parts of her body. This was related to an assault on her by a female coworker and the ensuing noncooperation from their employer in providing monetary damages. For several sessions she was intense and tearful as she described her trauma. It was new and fresh, invading every part of her being. I was sure it was a recent event. You can imagine my surprise when I learned that the assault had occurred five years previously and that she'd had four and a half years of psychotherapy since that time.

When we become swallowed up by our past, we are lost to ourselves and to others. Be aware of the

dangers of excessive retrospection and only look to the past to search for constructive lessons and information you can use to improve your present life. When possible, use data about your past as a neutral, objective, experiential encyclopedia you consult to develop the wisdom and insight necessary to move forward positively into new experiences.

Never use the past to justify or to maintain a current negative position. Observe old negative patterns and change the way you view them. Take from life, even from pain, whatever you can learn from it. This will enable you to cope more positively with whatever is coming next. We all have pain. What differentiates the winners from the losers is how we choose to perceive and cope with our adversities and challenges.

### RELEASE ANGER

Chronic anger—whether for a specific reason or for a host of ill-defined ones—hurts no one more than it hurts the one holding on to it. The path of least resistance and greatest health is to learn to forgive others, or to “forgive” a situation, in order to release such consuming feelings. We cannot possibly be angry and happy at the same time. Which will you choose? There are many books and tapes available to help with this process for those who feel stuck in anger. It is also useful to work psychologically and spiritually to move beyond the anger to a position of compassion and forgiveness. Few of us are at this level of development, but it is a liberating goal toward which to aim, and such forgiveness is really an important process by which we gain the integrity of our self.

## **CULTIVATE A MEANINGFUL, USEFUL, SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY**

Spiritual faith can sometimes be a deciding factor in whether or not extreme stress tips the balance, toward disease and in determining healing once the disease process has set in. By spiritual I do not necessarily mean religious, though the two ideally coincide. Spiritual development can liberate and heal you whereas some religions can bind you by promoting guilt and conflict and by perpetuating judgment and condemnation rather than compassion and forgiveness. This can engender additional suffering in some depressed people who are already prone to guilt and self-condemnation. (Perversely, these people may be drawn to such punitive orientations.)

Be flexible enough to realize when a belief system is not working for you and to search openly for a new one. The fundamental principles of all spiritual pathways are the same, but because of our human differences, a pathway useful for one may be absolutely unworkable for another.

If you have never had any particular kind of spiritual philosophy, explore whether or not you might be happier and enriched if you developed this aspect of yourself. I believe in what works to make us happier and healthier, and I believe that is what a loving God intends for us.

## **FIND THE LIGHT IN YOURSELF**

There's a parable about an old woman who was stitching clothes in her room late one afternoon. She dropped her needle and began to look for it, but the room darkened before she could find it. The woman had to finish her sewing, so she decided to look for

the needle outside, where there was more light. Why waste time searching inside where it was dark?

For many of us, happiness—like the old woman's needle—is lost inside, inside our minds and hearts. It is there that we must look to find it. If we search outside ourselves, the happiness we find is often only temporary and illusory. We visit a lovely waterfall and relax and find joy in its environment. Then we notice that there is a charming house on the nearby land and we begin to plan and scheme to buy it. We want to possess the land so that we can keep the happy feeling the waterfall has given us. Real estate agents, roof leaks, tax problems and bad plumbing are the result, and as we sit in the same spot as our first viewing we realize that our former happiness with the waterfall has vanished. We got the outside thing, but not the happiness.

The program in this book will not automatically bring you happiness. It will, however, lead you to the nutrients that are important for influencing your brain chemistry in a positive way. You have also discovered where else to look for the cause and correction of your unpleasant mood changes. This information, combined with careful detective work and follow-through with the program, can help to give you the happiness we all seek.

You now have improved tools for mind control and for becoming aware of and developing your own properties of light and love.

And remember—

We are not here to experience

Mental and existential bondage

We are here to rejoice, to give and receive  
joy,

To see and experience the true essence

Not superficial appearances

To perceive beauty, order, and harmony  
Not ugliness, chaos, and discord  
To see color, to vibrate and flow with the  
rhythm  
Of time  
To germinate, come to fruition, and ultimately  
fade  
To be swallowed, then spewn into the  
Next river of life, new energy, new form  
Beyond our current level of reckoning  
With unwavering gradual beckoning to cross  
The horizon of time  
Exchanging dimensions  
Expanding and uniting—

—Bon voyage