

Chapter 1

Awareness of the External: Conditioning and Influences

Inside every human there are two energies, the dark and the light.

These energies, also called positivity and negativity, contain vibrations. With all its heaviness, the dark energy vibrates slowly. The light, without the density to slow it down, vibrates at a much higher speed. Therefore, while dark energy will weigh you down, light energy is uplifting.



These two energies provide our souls with the opportunity to experience life and grow. The yin/yang symbol reminds us that there is ebb and flow with the dark and the light, and each energy contains some of the other. It isn't necessary for you to rid yourself completely of dark energy. Instead, I ask you to grow in awareness and understanding of how both energies affect you.

With awareness, you will be more able to create the life you desire.

For most of my life, I was plagued by the dark energy of Anxiety. Anxiety lived inside me, running his own agenda, which was contrary to my desire to be happy. Anxiety sought to dominate me. He invaded my mind and marched my thoughts toward terrifying “what-if” scenarios. He initiated waves of fear that rippled out from the epicenter of my stomach. He was the prime instigator of my panic attacks. When I was in my late thirties, I

reached an emotional bottom and began the upward journey that would break me free from Anxiety's dominion. As I gained insight into his hold over me, I vowed that I wouldn't live in constant fear any longer.

But how could I make that change? I began to review my life.

My memories took me back to my early teens. I recalled my mom's fear-promoting lectures, in which she gave me all the vivid details of recent crimes against women. Mom read the whole newspaper on her day off and found her supply of articles about local victims. As she found the crime stories, she cut them out of the paper, making neat little squares that she could present to me. While I understand now that her intention was to teach me to make decisions that would keep me safe, I can also see that this is where my conditioning began and where Anxiety was born.

I also took a look at Mom's life. She, too, had been conditioned from childhood and trained to be fearful in her mothers' effort to keep her safe. As an adult, without her conscious realization, her choices fed the energy of fear, keeping it alive in her life. She watched the news a lot and read the newspaper as if it were her homework. When I'd overhear her talking on the phone to her family, they were always talking about the latest ailments of people she knew. Although she had no idea that she was tormenting herself, she was perpetuating the cycle of fear and negativity.

As I engaged in this examination of our lives, it dawned on me that if I were going to make good on the vow I'd made to myself, I'd need to become more aware. If you've been conditioned to negativity like me, you won't even recognize the incoming contaminants. When we don't see them, we continue to accept them without question.

Just like I did for years....

And then I woke up.

We are bombarded every day by manufactured negativity and fear. It comes in the form of angry or depressing music, gossip magazines, television programs, horror movies, and the daily news. We call this barrage of negativity "entertainment." Because this conditioning has resulted in our desensitization to dark energy, we

have learned to accept this focus as *normal*. But that's all it is—it's what we're focused on. **There's nothing normal about it.**

Not only have we been conditioned to notice the negative aspect of things first, but many of us also accept gossip as useful communication and think that drama is part of daily life. We become so sick in this conditioning that negativity actually makes us feel *alive*. Some of us get the fix of excitement we need when we connect with friends through recapping the injustices in our day or participating in gossip and creating drama. Here's a question for you. *Do you get excited when you have a juicy story to pass on?*

When we watch so-called reality TV, outrageous Jerry Springer type talk shows, and true-story dramas, we reinforce the idea that drama is part of life. **And we learn to settle for living inside our own personal dramas.**

All by itself, negativity is so infectious that it's usually the kick-off point for ordinary conversations. It's bred when we exchange stories with friends or family that contain a common focus—things that aren't going well. When there isn't enough illness, sadness, or drama in their own circle of family and friends, negative people will extend the circle out to repeat stories about people they don't even know. But is it really appropriate for another person to say, "The neighbor up the street (the one I don't know) has a sister, whose best friend's cousin was recently diagnosed with cancer?" I'd hardly call this conversation. It's more like a surprise attack on my energy. In truth, it feels like a violation.

It's no wonder that people have trouble finding the path to peace, contentment, and happiness. How on earth would you recognize peace, contentment or happiness if it's not what you're used to? You aren't going to be struck by the lighting bolt of happiness one magical day. You have to make a decision to retrain your mind to not only recognize joy, but also to seek it. And just like with any training, change doesn't happen overnight. You have to be diligent in your observation of what's going on inside your mind. That means you'll have to pay attention to your thoughts as well as to anything that influences and contaminates your thoughts.

Once you've made the commitment, each time you find your mind wandering off in the direction of old, negative, thought patterns and old conditioning, you'll need to bring it back to center

and remind it that you are committed to a new view of life. Old patterns are like deep grooves in our minds. Our mind moves along comfortably in its groove. When we begin to retrain it, we are asking it to make a sharp right turn, jumping it out of its natural track. If we slack off and become less vigilant, our mind will slowly slide back into its usual old groove. It takes commitment to keep turning our thoughts to the right until we have created a new pathway for them.

When I was first beginning to recondition my mind, if I ran into a friend who asked me how I was doing, my reflex was to say, “I’m okay,” using a ho-hum tone that implied I wasn’t really okay. The old me responded in this manner in order to cast out bait, hoping to get some extra attention. If the bait worked and I was asked, “Are you sure you’re okay?” the Poor Me part of my brain scoured the day to find things to complain about. *This was an old pattern at work.* Over time, I convinced my brain that using old words and tones to imply, “I’m just surviving every day,” was, in fact, the place I was creating my life from. Didn’t I want to be more than a survivor who was “just okay”? I began to catch myself as soon as I was asked the question. I made a firm commitment to answer honestly but positively. It took me a few months practice to break the old reflex and get out of that old groove, but I came to realize that it’s just as easy to scour my brain for something positive to say, as it is to respond negatively.

Once I became aware of the conditioning that existed in me, I was hungry for understanding on a deeper level. I began to look around and soon noticed just how many influences I’d lived with unconsciously. Prior to this realization, I was vulnerable to the influences that I brushed up against during each day. Those influences determined how I felt and determined my attitude. As I took a look at the influences that follow, it dawned on me that I always have a choice. I choose what I allow to influence me and thereby consciously create my day.

Let’s start with a look at music.