

Banish Doubt Live Your Dream

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*Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we might win, by fearing to attempt.
Shakespeare – Measure for Measure*

Too many of us are living our doubts instead of our dreams. In order to live our dreams our first lesson is to banish the traitor of self-doubt from our inner world.

It is our birthright to act and think freely and strive to live to our potential. This is the experience we are all seeking in life. Self-doubt robs us of the freedom to do this. It locks us in a prison of fear where we are restricted from acting and thinking freely. When we choose to live behind the bars of self-doubt our perception of the world is distorted. We look out and find the shadow of doubt cast across the landscape of our lives. Consequently, we perceive a world that *takes things from us* instead of *gives things to us*. And so when we think of extending our efforts we are afraid that the world will steal our pride, our pleasures, our profits or our sense of security; instead of expecting it *to give to us* the opportunity to grow in self-respect, and experience the joy and confidence that comes from risking and learning. *The good that we might win* remains hidden from our eyes. We are rendered impotent, hopeless enemies against ourselves. There is no more dreadful habit than this habit of doubt.

Where does doubt come from? Doubt is handed down to us from our past. We have adopted it from the beliefs of our parents, our relatives, our teachers, our peers, and our culture. It holds us hostage with its cynical, unloving litany of: *I'm not smart enough...I'm not talented enough...I'm not good enough....I'll be laughed at...I might fail and loose it all...I might fail and discover I don't have what I thought I had... I might succeed and have to keep on proving myself and I can't*. The truth is, we actually create these conditions by dwelling on them and identifying with them. The more we continue to identify with these beliefs of the past and focus on the feelings associated with them, the more they continue to affect our perception of ourselves and our world.

This is precisely the condition that we must escape. If we want to live our dreams we must come to understand that our past beliefs need not have a hold over us unless we let them. It is the *belief* that we think ourselves unable to accomplish certain things that holds us back. When we let go of this belief we open ourselves up to a world of possibilities instead of impossibilities making room for miracles to occur in our lives.

How can we release ourselves from our past limiting beliefs? There is one simple way for us to do this. Recognize the voice of doubt for the traitor that it is, and refuse to listen to its lies anymore. We have to do the same thing we ask our children to do - *just say no* to doubt. Turn it off.

This may seem difficult; I can assure you it's only the voice of doubt that dupes us into thinking so. When we resist the notion that we can banish doubt that easily we must ask ourselves if we want to keep the problem or accept the solution? If we want to hold on to the problem of doubt then our minds will collude with doubt's offering by continuing to perceive a world that takes *things from us* instead of one that *gives things to us*. Our minds will perceive the world as if it were attacking us or as if it wants to enslave us or desert us in our hour of need. And so we will respond to the world as if it has actually done so. Abiding with doubt in this way gives power to a lie. For the world gives back to us what we believe and project out on to it.

If we are ready to accept the simplicity of the solution to banish all doubt then we must begin with a conscious decision to turn off its voice. We must stop ourselves every time we catch ourselves listening to it. One sure way of getting better at doing this is through the practice of meditation. Meditation gives us the experience of witnessing our thoughts. It teaches us that we are not our thoughts. We are the ones choosing our thoughts. So through meditation we learn to detach from our thoughts and the limiting beliefs associated with them. As we learn to control our thoughts in this way we discover that we can choose peaceful, harmonious thoughts in the present just as easily as we can choose anxious, discordant ones from the past. Peaceful thoughts create harmony and balance in the mind/body system. Peace brings hope. Hope fills us with positive expectations and allows us to experience a sense of freedom. This opens us up to the world of possibility instead of impossibility. In the end, when we say no to doubt we make more room in our lives for faith. Faith is doubt's antidote. Eventually faith compels our allegiance because we see that it offers us that which we truly want – the freedom to pursue our birthright.

How do we grow in faith? We grow in faith when we nurture the faith that resides inside of us already. We act on faith every day. We have faith and trust in our body's ability to function. If we constantly doubted our bodies, wouldn't this interfere with their proper functioning? We walk, eat, breathe, sleep and carry out hundreds of bodily actions by faith every single day. To do these things we rely on the invisible energy that is inside of us directing our bodies. We don't have to see this energy to have knowledge of its existence anymore than we have to see the wind to know what blows the leaves on the trees. The more we pay attention to how much we rely on this invisible energy of faith every day, the more our faith increases. As we put our attention on the active role the invisible quality of faith plays in our lives our confidence and positive expectations about life increase. When this occurs the world that awaits our perception becomes born out of our positive expectations. Our transformed perspective on life draws to us the people and events that we expect as we become co-creators and collaborators of our own destiny.

Does this mean that we'll never have moments of doubt? Of course not. What it does mean is that our perspective on things will be so changed by our faith that obstacles will be seen as opportunities. We will begin to see them as lessons that have come to us at just the right moment to teach us what we need to learn. We will begin to accept whatever comes our way as part of a mysterious providence that is guiding our life.

We'll see all the things around us as part of a divine order. And even when we don't understand the implications of things at the moment, our faith will create an opening in us to accept divine intervention. And so we will begin to put our emphasis on *learning* something instead of *doing* something each time we step out in faith. Instead of becoming frustrated by obstacles we become curious about what it is they are trying to teach us. Through the prism of this new perspective we will perceive fewer and fewer obstacles and more and more lessons, until, eventually we will matriculate to higher and higher levels of learning.

Through the process of all of this we will come to realize that our doubts are merely figments of our imagination anyway. Doubt is a ghost, a monster, a dragon perceived by our imagination and responded to emotionally and physically by the body as if it were real. The body works like this quite regularly. We cry when we see a sad movie or read a sad book; our hearts race when we think about the speech we have to give, or the raise we want to ask for. The body responds emotionally and physically to the images we create in our minds. When we create images of doubt the body responds emotionally and physically as if the images were real. If our mind is capable of creating doubt in this way, then our mind is also capable of banishing doubt and putting faith in its place. If we fail to replace doubt with faith we will keep being held hostage by the fear it generates. The question is, do we want to remain hostages to the fear created by doubt or become hosts to the freedom engendered by faith?

If the latter is true then we must banish all thoughts of doubt and allow our actions to be guided by the faith that we chose to host instead. As we do this we will discover that we will automatically be projecting faith out onto the people and circumstances of our lives. In return, life will be like a mirror reflecting back to us the quality of faith that we are hosting in our hearts. We will experience life as *giving to us* instead of *taking from us*. When we banish all doubt and replace it with faith our lives will bear witness to all the good we have gained by not doubting and fearing to attempt. And, as A Course In Miracles teaches us when we banish all doubt and replace it with faith, faith will turn our *ghosts* into curtains, our *monsters* into shadows, and our *dragons* into dreams.