

4

LESSON



HEALTHY AT HEART

Discover a surprising and effective approach to overcoming anxiety and cultivating emotional health. See how sidestepping emotional distress to focus on life's meaningful tasks empowers enduring well-being.

WOMAN AT THE WINDOW
Issachar Ber Ryback,
1897-1935, gouache and
watercolor, 1930, Paris

I. CASE STUDIES

This lesson explores the Rebbe's guidance regarding a vital component of leading a wholesome life: emotional health and well-being.



TEXT 1A

Dismissing Thoughts

The Rebbe, English correspondence, 20 Tamuz, 5725
[July 20, 1965]

With regard to the thought which you expressed in your letter, I believe I have already written to you before, that there are many problems and states of mind which are best dealt with by dismissing them from the mind completely, at any rate for a period of time. It is then possible to return to those problems with a fresh mind and in a more objective state, so as to evaluate the problems in their true perspective and reality and it is then easier to find the proper solution. In the vast majority of such cases the individual himself can decide how long this period of dismissal from attention should be, judging by the degree of objectivity which he can attain as time goes on.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENCE

The Rebbe's correspondence includes many thousands of letters in English. Dr. Nissan Mindel, a member of the Rebbe's secretariat, was responsible for these letters. The Rebbe would dictate his responses to Dr. Mindel, who would draft letters for the Rebbe's review and editing. It is not always clear whether the letters we possess are Mindel's initial drafts, or the final version authorized by the Rebbe to be sent to the recipient.



TEXT 1B

Rechanneling

The Rebbe, *ibid.*

Needless to say, also, that it is not an easy thing to dismiss a problem from the mind, especially a matter that involves one's own self. This would be almost impossible unless one can engage one's thought and attention in a completely unrelated subject. For, man's thinking process is constantly in a state of flux and has a tendency, consciously or subconsciously, to revert to the subject matter which one wishes to dismiss from the mind. Therefore, when resolving to dismiss the matter from one's mind, it is necessary immediately to find some other subject, unrelated to the first, in which to engage one's attention.

Another point which is also almost universally true is that it is not easy for the person involved to find the proper subject in which to engage one's mind. But here it is possible to receive help from friends who would know you and your psychological makeup. Undoubtedly you have such friends within reach.



TEXT 1C

Ending Self-Recrimination

The Rebbe, *ibid.*

Generally there is the teaching of our Sages that “Nothing stands in the way of repentance for the past and commitment for the future.” Here too the principle enunciated above may be applied, namely, that although it is necessary to end the transgression immediately, whether it is a sin of commission or omission, it is also often necessary to end immediately any self-recrimination, or brooding, in regard to the sins of the past.

One of the obvious reasons for this is that brooding over past failures is bound to be depressing and discouraging and would undermine one’s confidence in the future, even one’s confidence in the efficacy of *teshuva* [repentance]. Therefore it is advisable to dismiss such thoughts for the time being and leave them for more propitious times.

May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in regard to all the above.



How do we know when
G-d has forgiven? **Rabbi**
Shalom Paltiel explains:
myjli.com/Rebbe



TEXT 2A

The Jealous Sister

The Rebbe, English correspondence, 3 Cheshvan, 5721 [October 24, 1960]

The reasons for your younger daughter's condition are not at all complicated. The causes seem to lie in the fact that your daughter is subconsciously jealous of her older sister, and such a feeling manifests itself by a desire not to be interested in those activities where the person is unable to compete successfully. Therefore, your younger daughter shows little inclination to engage in the activities in which her sister is more successful than she. However, since such is the attitude of jealousy, creating a subconscious feeling of guilt, one is prone to compensate for it by an outward show of attachment. That is why she flies to the defense of her sister if anyone should say anything disparaging against her.



TURMOIL

Leah Raab, acrylic on canvas, 2002, Raanana, Israel

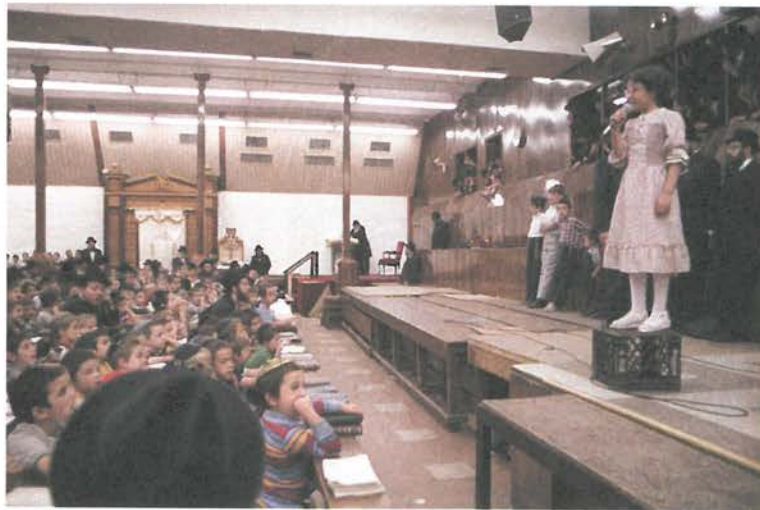


TEXT 2B

Restoring Confidence

The Rebbe, *ibid.*

At the same time this diagnosis suggests also the method of therapy, namely, that every effort should be made to restore her confidence by offering her opportunities to engage in such activities where she can take a leading part and excel herself. Needless to say this should be done in a gradual way, for, in her present state of mind she would be reluctant to undertake responsibilities all at once. But surely, both at school and in other cultural circles, there are opportunities for her to develop her artistic and other talents. It would be psychologically beneficial to her if the activities would be of a kind in which her sister does not participate. The choice of such activities is fairly wide, and they could be cultural, charitable, or youth work among Jewish youth, and the like.



Children's rally in the main sanctuary of Chabad headquarters, 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York, 27 Tishrei, 5744 (October 4, 1983)
(Photo: Jewish Educational Media)

II. LIFE'S HEALING POWER

The above cases captured the Rebbe's counsel to several individuals dealing with emotional health challenges. It is now possible to explore the philosophical basis for his approach.



TEXT 3

Distraction

The Rebbe, *Likutei Sichot* 36, p. 324

קִשָּׁה לַתֵּת עֵצָה מֵרַחוּק, שֶׁהִרִי הִתְנַאֵם בְּמַדִּינָה
וּבְמִשְׁפָּחָה וְכוּ'. יֵשׁ לָהֶם הַשְׁפָּעָה בְּכָגוֹן זֶה, וְאַלֶּה הָרוּאִים
מִקְרֹוב מְסֻגָּלִים וּמִמָּחִים יוֹתֵר בְּאַפְּנֵי טָפוּל בְּכָל מִקְרָה.
כִּיּוֹן שֶׁכָּבֵר כְּתִבָּה אֵלַי, וְהִרִי הִכַּל בְּהַשְׁגָּחָה פְּרִטִית,
אַדְגִּישׁ בָּזֶה מָה שֶׁרְאִיתִי בְּרַב הַמִּקְרִים בְּמִצָּב דּוֹמָה,
גִּוֵּרִים פָּעִיל וְטוֹב בְּיוֹתֵר, וּלְמִרְבִּית תְּמַהוּנִי לֹא מִנְצָלִים
אוֹתוֹ, עַל כָּל פְּנִים בְּמִלּוּא הַמַּדָּה, וְהוּא הָעֵנֶן דְּהִסָּח הַדַּעַת.
וּכְמִדַּת הַהֲצֻלָּחָה לְהַסִּיחַ דַּעַת הַנִּזְקָק לְטָפוּל מִמִּצָּבוֹ,
הִרִי זֶה מְגִדִּיל כּוּחוֹת הַטְּבָעִיִּים שֶׁל הַגּוֹף לְהִתְרַפְּאוֹת, וְכֵן
שֶׁל שְׂאֵר הַגּוֹרָמִים הַפּוֹזִיטִיבִים לְהַגְבִּיר פְּעֻלָּתָם...
וְהַדְרָף לָזֶה הִיא שִׁיחֵי עֲסוּקִים בְּמִשְׁהוֹ שְׂאִין לָזֶה כָּל
שִׂיכּוֹת לְמִצָּב בְּרִיאוֹתָם. וּבְכִדִּי לְהַסִּיחַ דַּעַת בְּפֶעַל צָרִיף
לְהִיּוֹת קָשׁוּר בְּפֶעַל שֶׁתִּגְרֹם לוֹ אִזּוֹ לֶה סָפוּק נַפְשִׁי, כְּגוֹן
לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹבָה לְהַזְוִלָּת, אֲשֶׁר גַּם בְּלֹא הֶכִי מִתְקַבֵּל עַל
דַּעַת כָּל אֶחָד וְאַחַת, וּבְפֶרֶט בְּתַקּוּפַתְנוּ זֶה רַבַּת הַמְהוּמוֹת
וְהַצָּרִיכִים מְרַבִּים, וּבְקָל אֶפְשָׁר לְמַצָּא אֶפֶן עֶזֶר לְהִיטִיב
לְהַזְוִלָּת שִׁיחֵיהָ מִתְאִים לְהַסְבִּיבָה וּלְתַנְאִי הַזְקוּק לְרַפּוּאָה.

LIKUTEI SICHOT

Widely considered the Rebbe's magnum opus, the 39 volumes of *Likutei Sichot* feature scholarly essays relating to themes in the weekly Torah portions and the Jewish holidays. The Rebbe initially conveyed these concepts in his public talks and subsequently reworked them for publication. In some volumes, the essays appear in Yiddish, while in others they are in Hebrew. The appendixes to these volumes include letters written by the Rebbe.

It is difficult to offer counsel from afar, as the conditions of the country, the family, and so on have a direct bearing on the situation. Those who observe a situation from close proximity are better and more expertly equipped to arrive at an effective treatment. However, since you have already written to me, and everything is by Divine providence, I wish to emphasize something that I have witnessed in the majority of similar cases:

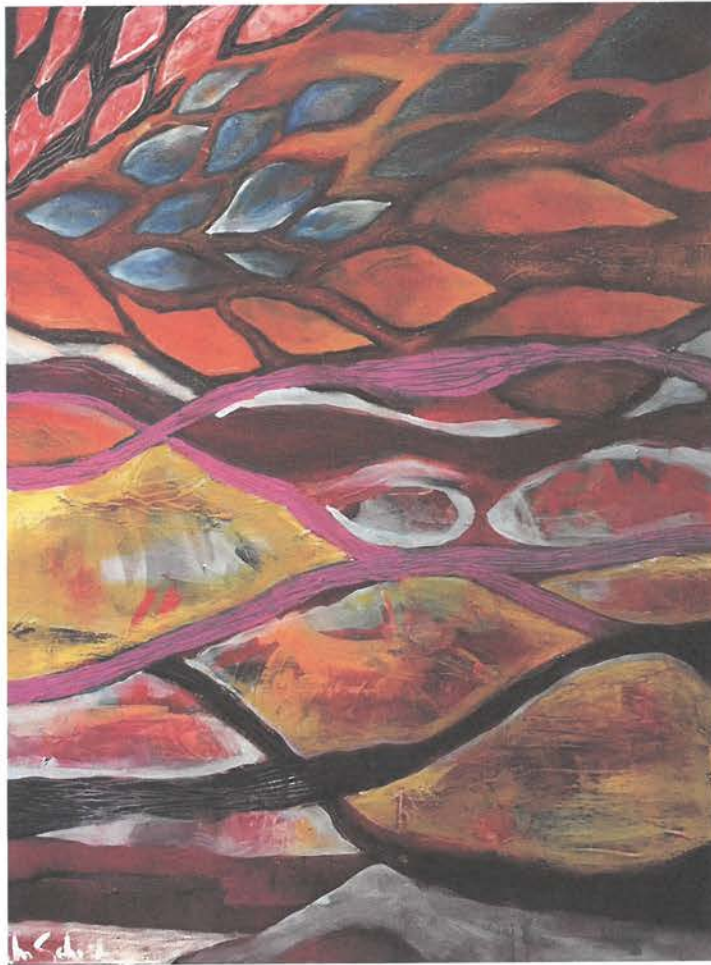
A decisive and extremely effective method—which, to my amazement, is not used, at least not as much as it should be used—is *hesach hadaat* (guiding the patient to entirely remove their mind from actively dwelling on the problematic issues at hand). The more the patient succeeds in ceasing to think about and dwell upon those issues that are the cause of their problems, the greater will be the ability of their natural internal healing powers, along with their other positive and curative aspects, to function with increased intensity and bring about healing. . . .

The above may be accomplished through arranging that these individuals are preoccupied with activities that lead to personal fulfillment, such as doing someone else a favor—something that in any case is acceptable to all [and therefore should not be difficult to convince them to do]. This is particularly so nowadays, when instability is so prevalent and



Let's Bake a Cake:
Mrs. Rishe Deitsch's
personal story:
myjli.com/Rebbe

individual needs are so numerous. It is relatively simple to find a way for these individuals to help others with activities that are consonant with the needs and nature of the locale and of the individual who requires healing.



BECOMING GENTLE
Rebecca Schisler, acrylic and
oil on canvas, Jerusalem



TEXT 4

Innate Straightforwardness

The Rebbe, *Igrot Kodesh* 10, p. 118

אינני מוצא מהו היסוד שיש לה להעדר השמחה, ולמה שכותבת אשר פתאום פקע הכל. וכיון שזהו דבר בלי יסוד, הרי אין לו קיום, ובין לילה היה ובן לילה אבד. ובלבד שלא לגרות על עצמה מחשבות פאלו שהם הפך טבע האדם והפך הוראת תורתנו תורת חיים, הדורשת מכל אחד ואחת עבודת ה' יתברך (שלאמתה אפשרית וצריכה להיות בכל רגע ורגע מחיי האדם) בשמחה דוקא.

ובודאי יודעת גם מהנסיון שרואים במוחש אשר אם לפעמים קשה להלחם נגד מצב רוח מסוים, העצה היעוצה היא הסח הדעת מהמצב, ולא בדרך מלחמה, אלא על ידי עסק בענינים אחרים ובמחשבות אחרות. והסיסמה הפללית בזה היא: האלקים עשה את האדם ישר, והמה בקשו חשבונות רבים. וכיון שהענין בה מהמה, הרי ההמה יכולים לבטלו בנקל...

ואסים בעצה, כיון ששואלת לעצתי: להסיח הדעת מכל ענינים של חשבונות הנפש, וללכת לבטח דרכה בחיים, כיון שההשגחה פרטית מלווה את כל אחד ואחת מאתנו כלנו על כל צעד ושעל. ולא רק בענינים הנראים בעינינו גדולי ערך, אלא בכל פרט ופרט בחיים.

I fail to see any grounds for your dejection and for your statement that everything has suddenly fallen apart. Since your anxiety is unfounded,

IGROT KODESH

A selection of Hebrew and Yiddish letters penned by the Rebbe. As of 2023, 35 volumes have been published in this series. The letters are published in chronological order, starting from 1925 and extending thus far to 1983. Only those letters that are of relevance to the public are published, and personal information is excised. The letters cover a wide range of issues: communal activism, Chabad philosophy, Talmud, Jewish law, kabbalah, practical advice, and much more.

it will not last long—“started today and gone tomorrow”—that is, provided you do not actively invite morose thoughts that run contrary to human nature and the dictates of our Torah of Life, which requires from each of us to serve G-d specifically with joy. In truth, this service is possible and necessary at each moment of mortal life.

You surely recognize—backed also with personal experience—the verily observable reality: that if it is sometimes difficult to battle a certain mood, the best advice is to distract your attention from the mood, not by fighting it, but by focusing your thoughts elsewhere. The general motto for this approach is: “G-d made humans straightforward, but they sought many complications” (ECCLESIASTES 7:29). Since the complications come from “they,” therefore “they” have the ability to nullify them easily. . . .

I will conclude with my advice, since you sought my counsel: Completely divert your mind from all introspective, self-examining thoughts. Proceed with confidence along your life’s path, since G-d’s providence accompanies each of us at each step of our lives—not only regarding matters that we consider highly important but in every detail of our lives.

III. THE REBBE AND VIKTOR FRANKL

The Rebbe's approach outlined above shares strong parallels with the logotherapy school of psychology that was founded by Dr. Viktor Frankl.



TEXT 5

Logotherapy

Dr. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*
(Boston: Beacon Press, 2014) pp. 91–92

I am reminded of the American doctor who once turned up in my office in Vienna and asked me . . . “What school do you stand for?”

I answered, “It is my own theory; it is called *logotherapy*.”

“Can you tell me in one sentence what is meant by logotherapy?” he asked. “At least, what is the difference between psychoanalysis and logotherapy?”

“Yes,” I said, “but in the first place, can you tell me in one sentence what you think the essence of psychoanalysis is?”

This was his answer: “During psychoanalysis, the patient must lie down on a couch and tell you things which sometimes are very disagreeable to tell.”

Whereupon I immediately retorted with the following improvisation: “Now, in

DR. VIKTOR EMIL FRANKL 1905–1997

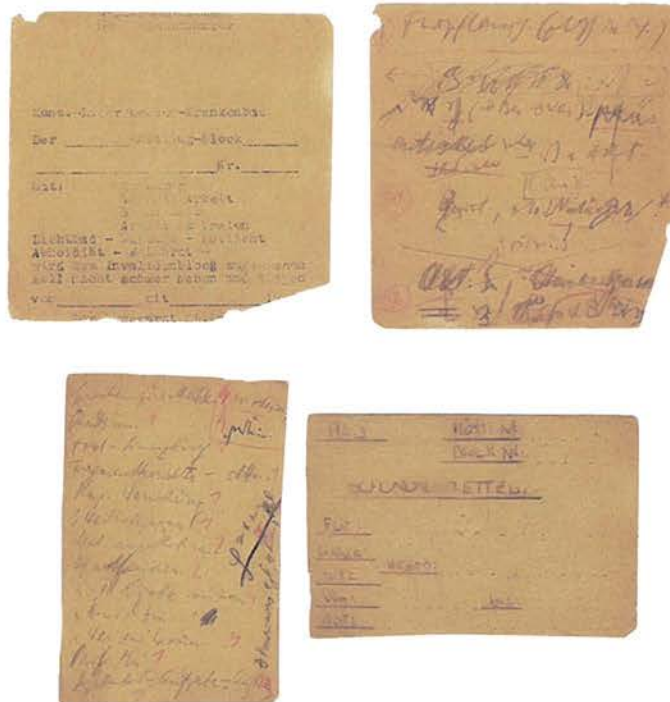
Founder of logotherapy. Frankl was professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School. During World War II, he spent 3 years in various concentration camps, including Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Dachau. Frankl was the founder of the psychotherapeutic school called logotherapy, and he authored 39 books, which have been published in 38 languages. His most famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, has sold over 9 million copies in the U.S. alone.



The life story of
Dr. Viktor Emil Frankl:
myjli.com/Rebbe

logotherapy the patient may remain sitting erect but he must hear things which sometimes are very disagreeable to hear.”

Of course, this was meant facetiously and not as a capsule version of logotherapy. However, there is something in it, inasmuch as logotherapy, in comparison with psychoanalysis, is a method less *retrospective* and less *introspective*. Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future. (Logotherapy, indeed, is a meaning-centered psychotherapy.) At the same time, logotherapy defocuses all the vicious-circle formations and feedback mechanisms which play such a great role in the development of neuroses. Thus, the typical self-centeredness of the neurotic is broken up instead of being continually fostered and reinforced.



Viktor Frankl, 1945, fragments of his reconstructed *Ärztliche Seelsorge*—English publication title: *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, considered his chief scientific work. Struggling with typhoid fever in the Tuerkheim (Bavaria) concentration camp, a branch of nearby Dachau, Frankl began this reconstruction of his manuscript—from memory, on stolen scraps of paper. His original manuscript had been destroyed, one of the ordeals of his Holocaust imprisonment. (Viktor Frankl Institute)



TEXT 6

Embracing the Tension

Dr. Victor Frankl, *ibid.*, p. 98

I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, “homeostasis,” i.e., a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. . . .

And one should not think that this holds true only for normal conditions; in neurotic individuals, it is even more valid. If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they *increase* the load which is laid upon it, for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So if therapists wish to foster their patients’ mental health, they should not be afraid to create a sound amount of tension through a reorientation toward the meaning of one’s life.



TEXT 7

The Rebbe's Endorsement

The Rebbe, *Igrot Kodesh* 26, p. 158

הִתְעַנֵּינִי בְּמִיחָד בְּמֵאמְרֵי דוֹקטוֹר פֶּרְנֶקֶל (וִינָה)
בְּזֶה, אֲבָל לְתַמְהוּנִי כִּנְרָאָה לֹא נִתְפַּשְׁטָה וְנִתְקַבְּלָה
הַשִּׁטָּה שֶׁלּוֹ כְּפִי הַדְּרוּשׁ. וְאַף שֶׁכַּמָּה סְבוּת יֵשׁ
לְמִצָּא לְתוֹפְעָה זוֹ שֶׁאֵין הַשִּׁטָּה שֶׁלּוֹ מִתְקַבֵּל כָּל
כֶּה... בְּכָל זֹאת הַקְשִׁיָּה עֲדִין בְּמִקוּמָה עוֹמֶדֶת.

I took particular interest in the writings of Dr. Frankl (from Vienna) in this matter. To my surprise, however, his approach has apparently not been appropriately disseminated nor has it become popularly accepted. Although one can find numerous reasons as to why his ideas are not widely accepted . . . the question [as to why it is not appreciated] still remains.



WISDOM

Carol Lezberg Neiger, five-color monotype plus gold leaf, from the artist's "Diaspora" series, 2016, Glenview, Illinois



Harvard psychologist
Dr. David Rosmarin
discusses the role of
spirituality in mental health:
myjti.com/Rebbe

IV. CONCLUSION

The following is a touching and relatable letter in which all the aforementioned ideas are put into action.



TEXT 8A

A Faulty Assessment

The Rebbe, *Igrot Kodesh* 13, p. 487

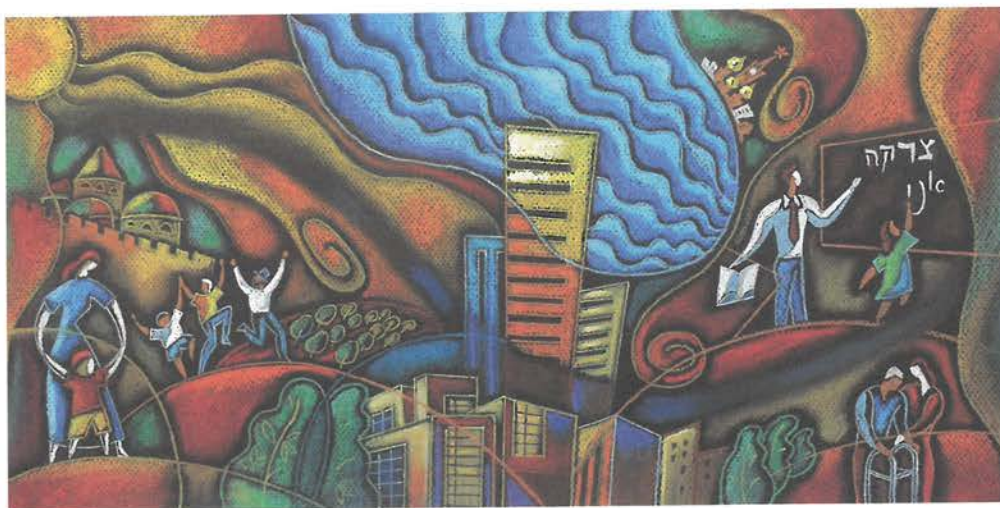
מובן אשר היסודות עליהם בונה השקפתה ומסקנותיה אינם נראים לי כלל. פונתי שלדעתי אינם במציאות, זאת אומרת שמצב רוחה עתה הוא מצב רוח עובר, ולפי מדת ההתאמצות שלה בזה יקדם בטול מצב רוח זה, כי ברור הדבר אשר יש לה כחות וגם פשרונות שיכולה לנצלם לא רק לתועלת עצמה, אלא גם לתועלת הזולת והרבים.

אלא, שככל דבר שבבריאה, צריך להוציא הענינים מן הכח אל הפעל ולפתחם, וברבא דרבא דורש זה יגיעה - אבל יגיעה שביכלת האדם. וכשיתבונן האדם אשר על ידי היגיעה שלו משך זמן קצר לפי ערה, תבוא תועלת בשבילו למשך שנים ארוכות, תועלת בשביל הזולת והרבים בשפור עניניהם, אם הרוחנים או הגשמיים או שניהם גם יחד, ואשר שפור זה עלול להביא פרות ופירי פרות - יבין בנקל אשר ההתאמצות וההשתדלות והיגיעה פדאיות הן.

Understandably, I do not agree at all with the foundations upon which you construct your perspective and conclusions. By this I mean that I

believe they are not grounded in reality. Your current state of mind is only temporary, and the more effort you put in, the quicker it will change. For it is absolutely clear that you have the power and also the talent to be of benefit not only to yourself but to others as well.

It is only that, like all things in this world, it is necessary to reveal and develop this potential into reality, which almost always takes effort. However, this is a degree of effort that is eminently attainable. When one considers that their relatively brief efforts will benefit themselves and others for many years to come, and it will improve their and the community's welfare—spiritually, materially, or both—and that these improvements will likely have a ripple effect and reach even further, then one will easily appreciate that their efforts and exertions to achieve this end are well worthwhile.



**HELPING HAND OF
JEWISH COMMUNITY**
Leon Zernitsky, acrylic
and textured pastel on
canvas, 2017, Canada



TEXT 8B

Slow and Steady

The Rebbe, *ibid.*

קרוב לומר, אשר כפי הרגיל, אי אפשר להשתנות
ממצב רוח קיצוני אחד למצב רוח הפכי בהחלט, אבל
אין זה הכרח. ומספיק אם תחליט בקבלתה מכתבי זה
שעליה לילה בכוון הרצוי, זאת אומרת לחיים פעילים,
ולתחיל בזה בפעל בצד הראשון, ואז צעד אחר
צעד המצטרפים אחד לשני ולשלישי, תמצא עצמה
במשך זמן לא ארוך בדרך המלה, זאת אומרת, הדרך
המובילה לחיים של ספוק נפשי ומשביעים רצון.

ואם לדעתי תשמע, תמשיך בלמודיה בשנה הבאה,
אבל ביחד עם זה תתעסק בעניין של חנוכה, מה טוב
איזה פעמים בשבוע. כונתי בארגון כחות ילדות
אשר תוכל להדריך אותן או גם ללמדן ענינים מתאים
להבנתן, מסבות שבת ויום טוב בשבילן, וכיוצא בזה.

Without a doubt, in the vast majority of instances, it is impossible to radically change one's frame of mind instantaneously. However, this is not what is required. It will suffice that upon receiving my letter you will resolve to move in the right *direction*—to begin leading a productive life. Start by taking a first step in this direction, and then, step-by-step in an accumulative progression, you will soon find yourself on the road to a life that brings you self-contentment and satisfaction.



Does Judaism
value our emotional
well-being? Mrs. Raizel
Schusterman responds:
myjli.com/Rebbe

If you wish to heed my advice, continue your studies next year, but in addition to studying you should also involve yourself with providing education—it would be best to do so several times a week. My intent is that you organize groups of children and be their counselor, or even teach them subjects that can be understood on their level, holding Shabbat and festival get-togethers for them, and similar initiatives.



DEREKH
Shinta S. Zenker, painting with
Hebrew calligraphy, France



TEXT 8C

Calling All Talent

The Rebbe, *ibid.*, pp. 487–488

וְתִתְּבוּנוֹ בְּעֵצָמָהּ: כָּל כֹּהֵן הָרִבָּה יֵשׁ לִפְעֵל בְּעוֹלָמֵנוּ, כָּל
כֹּהֵן כּוֹחוֹת נִמְצָאִים בְּתוֹכֵי כָּל אֶחָד וְאַחַת מִבְּנֵי אָדָם,
אֲבָל מִפְּנֵי רֵב הָעֲבוּדָה אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְוַתֵּר אֶפְלוּ עַל כֹּחַ
אֶחָד וְכִשְׁרוֹן אֶחָד, וְתִפְקִיד שֶׁל כָּל אֶחָד וְאַחַת לְהַפְעִיל
אֶת כָּל הָעוֹמֵד לְרִשּׁוּתוֹ לְשִׁפּוֹר חֵלְקוֹ בְּעוֹלָם.

וְהִתְחַלָּה כְּמוֹ בְּכָל הָעֲנִיָּיִם הוּא לְמוֹד הַמְקֻצֵּעַ,
רַכֵּשׁ יְדִיעוֹת הַהִכָּרְחוּת בְּכָלל וְהַהִכָּרְחוּת לְנִצּוֹל
כְּשִׁירוֹנוֹתָיו וְכּוֹחוֹתָיו שֶׁל אִישׁ פְּלוֹנִי בִּפְרָט. וְכִשְׁתִּתְּבוּנוֹ
בְּהֶאֱמוּר בָּזֶה פַּעַם וּשְׁתִּיִּם - תִּקְנוֹתֵי שְׁתַּכְּף וּמִיד
תִּתְחִיל בְּפַעּוֹלוֹת, [וְ] לֹא תִתְרַשֵּׁם מִיְּגִיעָה וְהִתְאַמְּצוֹת,
וּבִקְרוֹב תִּרְאֶה גַם כֵּן פָּרִי טוֹב בְּעִמְלָה.

Consider well: There is so much to accomplish in our world, and each human carries so much potential. Due to the vast amount of work that needs to be done, we cannot afford to give up on even one capability or talent. It is therefore the mission of every single person to harness *all* the potentials and talents they possess to improve their part of the world.

The beginning, like with everything, starts with learning the profession—acquiring the necessary knowledge in general, and especially the

knowledge necessary for using the individual's unique talents. I hope that, after you contemplate the above a couple of times, you will immediately begin being active, and you will not be fazed by the effort that is required. You will then be able to soon witness the fruits of your labor.



THE BOYS WITH VIOLINS II
Henry Weiss, oil on canvas

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Greeting and Blessings:

The Rebbe Advises

Selections from the Rebbe's letters
concerning emotional health

With reference to that which you write about your uncertainties and the difficulty in making decisions, as well as about general feelings of insecurity:

I trust it is unnecessary to elaborate to you at length that such feelings arise when a person thinks that he is alone and can rely only upon himself and his own judgment, and therefore feels doubtful and insecure about each move he has to make. . . .

When a person's faith in G-d is deep, and when he reflects that G-d's benevolent Providence extends to each and every person and to each and every detail and to each and every minute, surely he must develop a profound sense of security and confidence.

Letters from the Rebbe, vol. 2, p. 171

I was truly astonished to read in your letter that you cannot find anything in your life to bring you joy—this, after writing that you have “thank G-d, two very delightful and religiously observant daughters.”

You should make an effort to minimize, as much as possible, thoughts such as, “What am I feeling?”; “Am I afraid of something?” and the like.

Replace these thoughts with profound contemplation about how you can assist your neighbors and relatives and care for their needs. You will certainly find many such matters [in which your input will prove beneficial].

[Bear in mind that] one who acts benevolently toward their fellow is rewarded with an even greater measure of G-d's benevolence.

Since all matters need to be addressed through natural means as well, you should consult with a doctor who is also a friend.

Handwritten response of the Rebbe, dated 12 Tishrei, 5743 [September 29, 1982]



[Regarding your feelings of dissatisfaction,] I wish to make several observations:

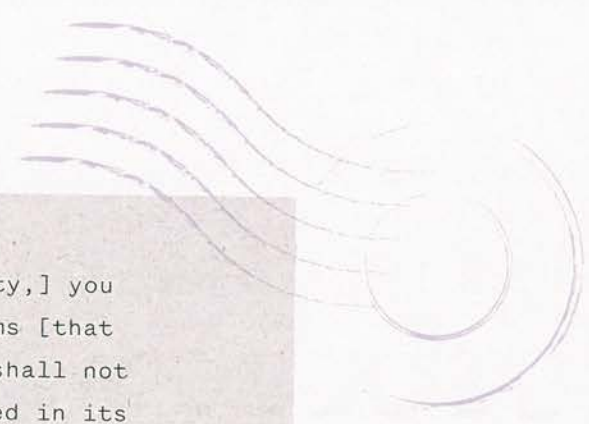
1. Feeling dissatisfied with oneself is a good sign, for it indicates vitality and an urge to rise and improve oneself, which is accomplished via a two-way method: withdrawal from the present state, and turning to a higher level.

2. If the urge to improve oneself leads to downheartedness and inertia, then it is the work of the yetzer hara [negative inclination], whose job it is to use every means at its disposal to prevent a Jew from carrying out good intentions connected with Torah and mitzvos.

The false and misleading voice of the yetzer hara should be stifled and ignored. Besides, as the Alter Rebbe states (Tanya [Likutei Amarim], ch. 25), even one single good deed creates an everlasting bond and communion with G-d (ibid., at length).

Thus a feeling of despondency is not only out of place, it is a stumbling block to the worship of G-d, as is more fully explained in the above and subsequent chapters of Tanya.

English correspondence, dated 16 Adar, 5712 [March 13, 1952]



[To dispel your fears and anxiety,] you should study chapter 23 of Psalms [that begins, "G-d is my Shepherd; I shall not lack,"] until you are well versed in its content (not necessarily the exact words, nor does the language in which you study it make a difference).

Recite this psalm every Shabbat, Monday, and Thursday. You should also give a few cents to charity each weekday morning, as well as before lighting candles for Shabbat and festivals.

In the future, pay no attention at all if somebody speaks about you: do not question them about it at all, or do anything of the like. For, as per the above psalm, "G-d is with you" and "only goodness and kindness will follow you." Consequently, no one at all can have any control over you, G-d forbid.

If your family doctor prescribes tranquilizers, you should follow his instructions. . . .

Your husband should check his tefilin, and the mezuzot of your home should be checked as well—if they have not been examined during the past twelve months.

Igrot Kodesh 25, pp. 256-257

You write about your [dejected and fearful] state of mind.

You should reflect on how G-d, Creator and Conductor of the entire world, oversees each and every one of us and protects us from untoward things. All that is necessary is that your daily life be conducted in accordance with the directives of our "Torah of Life" and the performance of its commandments, concerning which it is stated, "You shall live by them."

[Therefore, you have no reason to be upset or fearful, for] in the words of [King David] the "sweet singer of Israel": "G-d is with me; I shall not fear" (Psalms 118:6).

Contemplate the above repeatedly until it is ingrained in your mind.

It would be proper for you to inspect the *mezuzot* of your home, assuring that they are all kosher according to Jewish law. You should observe the fine custom of Jewish women to always give charity prior to lighting candles for Shabbat and festivals.

Igrot Kodesh 24, p. 117

With regard to your inclination towards a feeling of sadness:

A useful remedy for this is to have firmly engraved in your mind that G-d, the Creator of the world, watches over everyone individually.

Since He is the Essence of Goodness, there is therefore no room for sadness or worry; this [concept] has been explained at length in various parts of the *Tanya* (see Index [at the back of the *Tanya*]).

It would be especially good for you to commit to memory the passage of *Tanya* at the beginning of [*Likutei Amarim*] chapter 41 (p. 56a), second line from the bottom. Whenever you feel sad or depressed, review that section in your mind or recite it orally. This will assist you in eliminating these undesirable emotions.



English correspondence, dated
7 Adar, 5717 [February 8, 1957]

KEY POINTS

- 1 A prominent approach to overcoming emotional challenge is to focus on our disturbing thoughts or emotions in an attempt to uncover and express deeper issues that lie at their core.
- 2 The Rebbe often advocated a contrary approach to emotional wellness. He insisted that emotional challenge can, at times, be overcome by moving the mind away from the issues and engaging it in unrelated meaningful and productive activities.
- 3 The Rebbe viewed the human soul as a Divine entity that is emotionally healthy at its core. When disturbing and negative thoughts become the dominant voice in an individual's conscious mind, their healthy core is relegated to the back burner. Through engaging the conscious mind in external, healthy areas, the disturbing thoughts lose their dominance, which permits the core inner health to reemerge and bring healing.