

Reducing Conflict 65 Paradise Mindset

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



I used to do a lot of teaching online. A student who lived in Detroit was lamenting another dreary winter day. He had reached the breaking point. His comment to a student in Hawaii was, "Well, I have to take responsibility for my own misery. After all, I chose not to live in paradise." I wrote to the student that "paradise" is a state of mind not a state of the Union.

Human beings have the power to live in reasonable happiness most of the time. They need to choose to exercise that power. That is true regardless of where they are located or what the conditions are. It all has to do with our attitude. Please understand, I am not being frivolous here. I am talking about true peace and contentment being possible, even when circumstances are far from pleasant.

Finding paradise in a POW Camp

There are stories of POWs who have achieved a state of joy, even as they were being starved. One such individual was Viktor Frankel during WWII in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Viktor was a psychologist in Vienna living a comfortable life when he was nabbed by the Nazis. Like most prisoners of war, He was treated with disdain, starved, and beaten.

The mindset to survive

Frankel was curious about why some people survived, while most others quickly died. He described the survival instinct as the realization that there was something significant to live for. The survivors had a mindset of "something significant yet to do in their life." Once they were reminded of their purpose for living, they had the ability to survive.

The paradise mindset in action

Viktor used the power of visualization to rise above the incredible conditions of the moment and feel joy. After the war, he wrote a book on his observations entitled [Man's Search for Meaning](#).

Some people feel they are in prison today

What prison do you live in? Does it sometimes feel like you are suffering needlessly at work? Are the managers in your organization kind of reminiscent of prison guards, or at

least schoolyard bullies? Do you feel there is little hope to be happy or content with the conditions that exist around you?

If that describes you, then realize you are making a choice. You are choosing to not live in paradise when the opportunity is there for you to do so. At least you can improve your frame of mind significantly.

You may say "This guy is crazy; he has no clue about my miserable existence here in this dungeon." That accusation is correct. I don't know your condition, but I do know the person most in control of your happiness is you. Choose to be happy or ignore this advice and remain miserable. I am not saying this is easy, because if it was, everyone would do it.

Focus on a positive mindset

If you choose to change conditions for the better, get some material on mental imaging and change your life. The more depressed you are, the more you have to gain. Most of the time you cannot change the conditions you face. You can control your attitude or reactions so that your state of mind is much more enjoyable.

This philosophy is not that profound, and we have all heard some form of it numerous times before. Some people call it "mind over matter." Norman Vincent Peale called it ["The Power of Positive Thinking."](#) Earl Nightingale made the observation that ["We become what we think about."](#)

One helpful book is the classic, [Psycho-Cybernetics](#) by Maxwell Maltz (1960). Maltz became fascinated with the process of setting goals for his plastic surgery patients. He learned the power of self-affirmation was enabled by the connection between the mind and the body.

He taught how developing a positive inner vision was a means of developing a positive outer vision. This led to the idea that a person's outer success almost never rises above the one visualized internally. More recent philosophers such as [Brene' Brown](#), [Stephen M.R. Covey](#), and [Lou Holtz](#) enhance the theory. They have based much of their work on the ideas originally developed by Maltz.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, when we are miserable, it is hard to remember that we are in control. We just need to assume that control. When you get depressed, try visualization techniques. They can make a big difference in your life. Paradise is not as far away as it may seem.

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