



Canada's Life Coach & Mentor presents:

## Pressing Your Own Buttons



### Happiness Lies Within

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Long, long ago, Metrodorus, the earliest disciple of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, wrote, “The happiness we receive from ourselves is greater than that which we obtain from our surroundings.”

To Metrodorus, it was an obvious and indisputable fact that the principal element in anyone’s wellbeing—indeed, in the whole tenor of a person’s existence—is his or her inner constitution. This is the immediate source of that inward satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which results from the sum total of our sensations, desires, and thoughts. Our surroundings exert only an indirect influence upon us. The same external events or circumstances affect no two of us alike even when we come from virtually the same surroundings. For we have immediate apprehension only of our own ideas, feelings, and desires. Our surroundings influence us only in so far as they bring these to life for us.

The world in which we live, takes its shape chiefly from the way we look at it. Therefore, it appears different to different people. To one person, the world is barren, dull, and superficial. To another, it is rich, interesting, and full of meaning.

On hearing about another person’s interesting experiences, many people *wish* that similar things could have happened in their lives, too. They completely miss the advantage to them if, instead of wishing, they acquired the aptitude, which gave those events their significance as that other person describes them. To a poet, for example, they may have been interesting adventures. However, to the dull perceptions of an ordinary individual they would have been merely stale, everyday occurrences.

This is the case with the works of many great writers. Their books reflect—often in disguise—actually lived events. Yet, the foolish reader envies their lives because so many delightful things happened to them. Instead, these same readers would find themselves better rewarded mastering that power of fantasy, which enabled those wordsmiths to turn their common experiences into something great and beautiful.

In the same way, a gloomy person makes a tragedy out of what appears to the optimist as only an interesting conflict, and to the indifferent soul as something without any meaning at all. That is because, every event, if we are to realize and appreciate it, requires the cooperation of two factors: a subject and an object. These are as closely and necessarily connected, as are oxygen and hydrogen in water. Even when the objective or external factor in an experience is the same for two or more of us, the subjective or personal appreciation of it varies. The event is just as different in the eyes of the different people as if the objective factor had not been alike at all.

To the dull mind, the best object in the world presents only a poor reality. Therefore, the dullard appreciates it poorly—like a fine landscape in foggy weather. The limits of our own consciousness,



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pen us up and none of us can directly get beyond those limits any more than we can get beyond our own skins. Nor is any external aid of much use to us. On the stage, an actor is a person of high estate, a derelict looking for a handout, a tired servant, a soldier, or a commander, and so on. These are mere external differences. The inner reality, the kernel of all these appearances, is the same—a poor player, with all the anxieties of our own lots. In life, it is just the same. Differences of rank and wealth give each of us a part to play, but this fact by no means implies a difference of inward happiness or pleasure. For there is the same being in all of us: a poor mortal, with his or her own hardships and troubles.

The life of every one of us comes stamped with the same character throughout. However much our external circumstances may differ, no one of us can get beyond his or her individuality. That is why, as Goethe observed, the life of each person, whether of low or high position, testifies to personality as the greatest factor in happiness. Change your outlook on life and you *will* change your life!

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