

The Power of Imagination

Good morning, everyone! This is today's Dharma Espresso on the power of imagination.

Let me tell you a very interesting story.

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An elderly man had a serious stroke that rendered him half paralyzed, unable to walk, and had to use a wheelchair. His family took him to a hospital for seniors. He shared the room with another senior, a cancer patient who could still walk and talk. He asked his roommate, "Your bed is by the window. Would you tell me what you see on the outside, please?" The cancer patient looked out and said, "OMG, there's a big park outside with lots of people. I see a lake, coconut trees, walkers, ball players, parents with children, dog walkers. Oh, everything looks so fun and beautiful!"

From there, the two men started to share their life stories about their dogs, their spouses, children, swimming pool, etc. They carried on lively conversations, so time passed by quickly. Every morning, the cancer patient would look out the window and described the scenery to his roommate. The two elderly men enjoyed talking to each other, sharing old memories, and bonding. The paralyzed man really appreciated his old friend's description of the park outside since it helped him to relive old memories and feel warm and comforted. Having an old friend for chatting was quite enjoyable.

Not long after, the cancer man passed away. When the nurse came in, she found him lying still, with eyes and lips closed, hands letting go, and smiling peacefully. The stroke man said goodbye to his old friend. When the nurse later made the bed, he asked if she could push his bed close to the window and roll it up so he could sit and look outside. She did so and helped him sit up. When he looked out the window, he was very surprised because there was no park and nobody outside. Three feet away was just a white wall. It turned out that his old friend didn't talk about the park but about what was in his mind instead. He had imagined all kinds of stories to entertain his roommate. There was nothing out there, just a white wall! The elderly man was very touched and realized that his friend's imagination had brought him back so many wonderful memories.

Dear everyone, there are times in our life when the power of thought and imagination can be so strong that they can change our emotions and feelings. Sometimes, if we stand outside with eyes closed and arms outstretched, and say, "I am open", we will really feel that our mind is open. If we think that we're standing on top of the Himalayas, we'll truly stand there and feel our mind wide open.

Thus, when we think of someone, think that we're sending our love, and that person will receive our love. You will see that you don't have to go far or do anything. The mind is very powerful. It can change the whole world around us. The problem is we don't use it. This is not far-fetched; it is imagination, the activation of the power of imagination in our mind. That means it is our illusion, not the bad kind, but the kind that is very positive since we have a very positive universe in our head, and this universe is always full of ideas.

Viktor Frankl is the founder of existential psychology. During World War II, he was captured by the Nazis because he was a Jewish doctor, but he was always ready to save people. He said that his body could be in jail, but his mind is boundless and quite free.

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Sometimes, we go on living but forgetting that we have a universe in our head, that our mind is wide open. We don't have to travel to different places for our mind to be open. We just need to stand in one place, close our eyes, and think of beautiful things to open our mind. The most important thing is that we can transmit our joy and positive mental images to other people so these images can be more powerful.

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According to existential psychology, if we always think of beautiful, uplifting things and share our mental stories with a smile to others, our listeners will travel in our wonderful world. This is better than traveling to far-away places. Sometimes, our greatest travel is from a negative place to a positive place, from the lack of imagination to bountiful imagination, from darkness to light. No need to look for something new and unusual on the outside. All things belong to the five Skandhas, the five great elements, and are only delusions.

Therefore, when we don't have an opportunity to travel anywhere, we can still enter our mind, open up our inner light, and share it with others. We will then find that mental travels are just as interesting as outside travels. We won't spend any money on a vacation, and we will feel very peaceful with our mind always wide open.

Thank you for listening. May you find a journey for today, traveling thousands of miles without ever leaving your desk or your house, like Lao Tzu's saying: "No need to step out of the door to know everything in the world."

Have a peaceful and serene day.

Dharma Master Heng Chang

(Translated and transcribed by Compassionate Service Society)