

Inner Well-Being - Can I Rely On Myself?

Written by Stephen Russell-Lacy



We all probably want happiness and inner well-being. Yet sometimes we lack uplifting thoughts, forget the meaning and purpose which gave our life a sense a of direction, or feel discouraged and stressed when facing adversity. Is it really so difficult creating inner well-being for ourselves?

Reliance on others for inner well-being

In times of hardship, we each need all the comfort, and encouragement we can get from family members. The boss may give us time off to recover. Our friends may put us up where they live for a while. But can others make us happy, deeply happy? Therapists know that despite their therapeutic skill, there are always some clients who don't improve. They also realize they cannot take all the credit for those who do get better by pursuing personal change. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Unless people take responsibility for their own lives, nothing much changes whatever expertise is provided.

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Reliance on one's own efforts alone for inner well-being

Many have wondered about ever finding inner well-being when going through an awful personal crisis, or when feeling apathetic and alienated from work. If they have tried to conjure up hope, confidence and contentment even with help from others, they probably have encountered great difficulty.

My own experience has been that I sometimes lack inspiration and a sense of strength to pursue what I guess is the right direction - one that I value and find meaningful. I've come to accept I have freedom and thus responsibility to try to do something about my life. But that I can't achieve this by myself alone. I can point myself in the right direction but can't create tolerance and generosity in myself just by having the right intentions. The soul needs nurturing.

Transpersonal energy creating inner well-being

I would suggest in addition to our own sensations and desires, personal growth comes from a greater light and energy. A higher power that give us inner well-being to manage the hurdles life placed in our path and to resist our personal demons. This idea of a higher power, however it is conceived, is also the view of the various 12 Step Recovery Programs available for various kinds of personal problems e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous.

These group interventions share the view that there is a spiritual source from beyond ourselves that can provide an inflow of healing power. In his best seller *The Road Less Traveled*, psychiatrist Scott Peck points out that natural growth and healing, mystical experiences, and fortunate coincidences, are commonplace. He says they are manifestations of a powerful force originating outside of human consciousness which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings. He calls it Grace. This is a force other than, and in addition to, our conscious will. He identifies it with the power of love. The desire to nurture the inner well-being of people.

Swedenborg's experience

Emanuel Swedenborg was a Christian mystic and spiritual philosopher who was born in the 17th century. Once he had a vision of a shining presence. He said a brilliant light appeared to him in a similar way to how the sun appears to all of us. Only one which radiated spiritual heat and light. Light symbolizing the wisdom that enlightens our thought: heat, the feeling of compassion that gives warmth to our concerns. He said that this spiritual sun, normally invisible to us, is the origin of all that is good and true in life and thus our inner well-being. The physical sun in our sky is the basis of our geography and time. Similarly, for him, the visionary sun was the basis of all personal direction and orientation.

In line with this mystical experience, Swedenborg comments on the biblical creation narrative - not he said to be taken literally but an account of the potential creation of spiritual development in each person. On the 4th day of the creation myth, the sun, together with the moon and stars formed. Symbolically speaking, receiving the sun's light enlightens our understanding of higher principles: receiving its warmth stirs in us a concern for others. The picture here is an individual newly recognizing that there is a higher source of deeper thought and kindness that comes from beyond oneself. Swedenborg maintains that this acknowledgment is critical. For without it, we each will depend only on yourself to find inner well-being. And this will lead to disappointment, pride and a sense of something lacking.

Conclusion about inner well-being

Swedenborg was writing during the Christian era in Europe. These days there are many who no longer believe in a personal God. I suspect that among non-religious people, there are nevertheless many who do believe in a universal spiritual source of everything. In other words, they acknowledge a Divinity that is both beyond, as well as potentially within, the individual. One that inspires, and is the origin of, compassion for others as well as for our own inner welfare. Also, the starting place of common sense to know what are useful and effective ways to act.

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