

The Secret of Inspiration

How to Activate Your Flair for Success

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Welcome

Thank you for joining me here. My hope is that the time you spend reading and reflecting on this book will be more than rewarded by the positive changes you will see in your life and work.

You will discover the secret of inspiration and how it activates your flair for success. You can expect to see solutions to problems that you were stuck with; find the right path through difficult decisions and experience a much greater sense of well-being. If any of this appeals to you, please read on!

Here my aim is to share what I have discovered on my own journey because it has universal relevance. Rather than just being individual to me, the fundamental principles work the same way for all human beings.

As you will see, this book is about a new understanding of how we humans actually function. It takes the form of a description; there is no prescription here. You won't find lists of things you must do or processes you should follow. Instead, simply by gaining this new understanding you will find that beneficial life-changes will occur all by themselves.

I know this seems a big claim and you may be a touch skeptical. All I suggest is to keep an open mind as you read further and test what you find against your own experience.

Testing is essential because this new understanding cannot be reached by an intellectual route. It's not about the accumulation and analysis of knowledge (I know because I've tried!) Instead, it is an experiential understanding which comes by recognising how it plays out in your own life.

By testing what is in this book against your own experience, you will soon see what is true for you. So I invite you to read on and see for yourself.

How Did I Come To Write This?

From a young age I was aware that life seemed to fall into two categories. Much of the time, life was normal. Most things that happened were variations on the familiar and my thoughts and feelings stayed within a certain range.

But every now and again, I would have times of bliss, times that went far beyond normal happiness. I would feel elated, filled with joy, wonder and beauty, as if lifted up to see much bigger horizons. Sometimes it would take my breath away. I would smile because I could sense my place in the universe and that fundamentally everything was OK.

Because I was curious about these special episodes, I began to take a deeper interest in what was going on. As I explored further, I became aware that I wasn't alone; apparently other people had similar experiences. When I came across what psychologists call peak experiences, I realized that experiences like these are actually quite widespread.

I loved these special glimpses over and above normal perception and I decided that I wanted to experience more of them. This is when I started to see them as examples of inspiration – after all, the literal meaning of inspire is 'to breathe life into' and that is what seemed to happen. Being inspired is like waking up from a kind of sleep-walking.

Waking Up

This is why we all love hero stories. We are drawn into them because we see an ordinary person 'wake up' and do extraordinary things. We feel a personal resonance because we would like to escape the narrowness of our own lives.

Of course, we get to decide what extraordinary means for us. While it may mean climbing Everest, it's more likely to mean rising above our normal limitations and feelings to reach success in our own terms.

We all have the natural ability to wake up to life, to become inspired. This is the very key to maximizing human potential. There is no need for any of us to feel stuck in our lives, putting up with habitual stress, frustration or failure. We can escape from our particular prison,

especially when we see that much of it is from our own inadvertent making.

When we're inspired our energy and motivation shoots up and confidence is boosted. We get creative ideas, find elusive solutions and we're much more productive. We also gain the clarity to see what is truly important in life which helps us make wiser decisions.

My own search for inspiration led me to many subjects and a lot of study. I delved into psychology, neuro-linguistic programming and emotional intelligence. I trained as a qualified coach and worked with people on a wide range of individual challenges. I accumulated a tool box full of tips and techniques that were very useful.

The Missing Piece

Yet I see now that I was missing the most fundamental piece of the picture. And a couple of years ago, it was the discovery of this missing piece that has made all the difference. This discovery is nothing less than how we human beings really work. Happily it also leads to the true source of inspiration.

This understanding is a radical shift. So it's worth exploring it together in the pages that follow. There are lots of positive implications. Among these, it shows us a much more certain way forward to overcome problems and challenges; it reduces stress and increases resilience; it opens up creative and exciting possibilities for the future; it gives us more well-being in our lives.

I've come to see that as children we intuitively understand how life works and then, somehow, over the years we forget. And in this state of forgetfulness, we unwittingly create many difficulties for ourselves.

The good news is that we can rediscover what we once knew and the rediscovery sets us free again. Some people describe this rediscovery as 'coming home'. That's how it feels to me - it's if all the striving to make sense is over. It reminds me of the lines from T.S Eliot's poem:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

This is why you might find that much of what is in this book has an echo of familiarity about it – it's not new, just forgotten. You have been this way before.

But don't just take my word for it – please test what follows against your own experience and see how it fits. Find what has the feel of truth about it.

Your Amazing Potential

There's a lot written and said these days about realizing your potential. Much of it aims to convince you that there is something missing that you must get.

Yet your true potential is already there! There is nothing missing. You already have the potential to live with a level of well-being and achievement that is truly amazing. This is what I mean by your flair for success.

It is simply a matter of awareness – when you wake-up to the reality of your real powers, you can make new choices about how you live and work. These new choices will, in turn, bring new results.

Most of us have grown up with a particular view of life that is so familiar that we no longer even notice it's there. But there are serious flaws in this view, flaws that mislead us in taking actions that work against us. When these flaws are exposed, we naturally make better choices and life becomes more rewarding.

This is fundamentally what this book is about – exploring how we human beings really work rather than the misleading view that is at the root of all our difficulties and struggles.

With this new awareness, you will be able to see solutions where before there were only problems. You will be able to create new options for the future and exciting paths to take.

Being Human

We know that as individuals, the circumstances of our own life are unique. The things we do, the relationships we have, our dreams and fears are our own. Yet because we are all human beings, there are certain things we have in common.

One thing we can guarantee is that, as we go through life, there will be ups and downs. There will be times when life seems to be going well and we feel great, and other times when things seem to be going wrong and we feel low.

Because we are intelligent beings, we notice this variation in mood and it's natural for us to want to try to maximize the up-times and minimize the down-times.

We also notice that doing certain activities seem to lift us up and, conversely, other activities appear bring us down. For instance, many people find that going to work on Monday morning brings on the blues while setting off on holiday sparks a high.

On the face of it, it seems that our experience comes directly from the activity. On this level, a successful strategy would be to do only those activities which appear to trigger a good feeling. But there's a problem with this because sometimes the *same activity* brings a different experience.

My first clear memory of this was when I was ten years old. Each weekday I had to get up early for school and it was hard. I would stay in bed until the last possible minute and only then grudgingly get ready for school.

Then one weekend my Dad promised to take me to London to see a famous steam train. When Saturday morning came, I was surprised to find I could bounce out of bed just as early as a school-day but easily and with enthusiasm. The same activity – getting up early – was a completely different experience.

When we see that our experience does not come directly from the activity we are engaged in, we start looking for other factors. Sooner or later we recognize that our state of mind is also at play.

State of Mind

It's common knowledge that if we tackle a task with a high state of mind we are likely to make a better job of it than if we are in a low high state of mind. This is particularly well recognized in the field of sport.

Star athletes put almost as much emphasis on mental preparation as on physical training. They know that their state of mind can make the difference between winning and losing.

Although we might never set foot on a race track, it works the same way for us too. We know that things are easier and more rewarding to do when we are in the right state of mind. We are more productive and achieve a higher standard than when our mind is off.

So now it looks as if a successful strategy would be to manage your state of mind. Then you could engineer things so that you are in a good state of mind for whatever task you have in front of you.

To be honest, this is how I saw it for many years. There are many techniques that aim to do just this – to raise state of mind when it's low and preserve state of mind when it's high. Then surely should we not be able to maximize our success and minimize our failures?

The Limitations of Techniques

It's true that some techniques work well for some of the time. Yet the results can never be guaranteed. But there is more fundamental limitation which is that it takes a lot of effort to be ready and apply an appropriate technique at the right time.

It's easy to get into a situation where the level of work required to manage our state of mind approaches the level of work needed to get the original task done!

More fundamentally, a strategy to manage state of mind is like trying to tackle a fire in pipeline without understanding the flow of fuel. It's trying to deal with consequences without understanding the cause.

Baking Biscuits

Here's a metaphor that may help.

Suppose you are baking batches of biscuits. But each time a batch comes out of the oven you see they are burnt. You try scraping off the black bits or icing over the worse ones but there is only so much you can do to 'un-burn' them.

But if instead you look to more fully understand the baking process itself, what actually happens in the oven, then you could avoid burning them in the first place.

So to understand how this plays out in life, rather than trying to fix our state of mind we could find out where our state of mind comes from. This will lead us to important clues about the source of inspiration. So let's continue by asking the fundamental question that follows.

Where Does Our Experience Come From?

We grow up to believe that our experience comes directly from external sources, like an activity, an event or another person. This can look very convincing.

For example, when another driver cuts you up in traffic on the way to work, they 'make you angry'. The experience of anger seems to come directly from the other driver. Or you might share a candlelit meal with a loved-one and it 'makes you happy'. The experience of happiness seems to come from the circumstances of the meal.

Yet we know there must be more to it than this. We've already seen that our state of mind has a big part to play. In a more relaxed state of mind, you might laugh off the inconsiderate driver. By way of contrast, the cosy meal would be far from happy if you were still sore over a previous argument.

We also know that our experience is subjective. Two people can watch the same film at the same time and have very different experiences. One thinks it is a great film while the other is bored stiff. Similarly, you

might be inspired by a scene of natural beauty which leaves other people untouched. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder.

It begins to look as if the idea that our experience is comes from external sources cannot be true. There are too many inconsistencies. So let's look at the other possibility, that somehow experience comes from inside.

Inside-Out

If our experience of life is not created by external sources, so-called outside-in, then it must be created inside-out. This is the radical shift I mentioned earlier – the new understanding of how we really function. Yet how is it possible for us to create our own experience?

It's all down to the power of thought. You see, we are always thinking – it starts when we are born and continues until we die. You could see thinking as a life-sign, like breathing or heartbeat.

What happens is that our powers of consciousness bring to life whatever we are thinking at the time. Our thoughts are converted into a sensory experience so that they become real to us. This leads to a radical conclusion:

Our experience always comes from our thinking in the moment

This is how you get scared by a horror movie even though you are safely sitting on your own sofa! It's also how you get angry at the inconsiderate driver. You think angry thoughts so you get the sensory experience of anger – you feel angry.

Feelings always come from thoughts

So if you think happy thoughts you will feel happy. If you think sad thoughts you will feel sad. If you think confusing thoughts you will feel confused. Test this yourself – for example, it is not possible to feel sad unless you think sad thoughts.

Knowing this, it may look as if controlling our thoughts would be a good idea. If we were to think only happy thoughts we would be happy all the time, right? In theory perhaps, but the problem with this is that we cannot control our thoughts. By the time we are aware of a thought, we have already thought it!

Thoughts enter our mind without invitation; there is a constant flow. We cannot choose which thoughts arrive but we can choose which thoughts to invest in. Just as you cannot control who comes to your front door, you can control who you let in and entertain for the evening.

It's the same for thoughts. We can entertain a thought by giving it attention. This gives the thought more energy and causes it to grow so that it influences our behaviour. But without attention, a thought has no power. It will soon fade away to be replaced by a new thought and our behaviour is unaffected.

For most of my life I believed that if a thought came to me, I had no choice but give it attention. I believed I had to take each thought seriously so I would examine, analyse and categorise it. It was as if every caller at the front door had to be invited to stay the weekend!

This, of course, generated much extra thinking and my mind was usually very busy. It's an onerous undertaking and, now I see, completely unnecessary! Just like you, I'm free to choose which thoughts to attend to and which thoughts to let go.

So how can you know which thoughts to invest in? This is where your feelings are a great guide. Because when you know that your feelings come from whatever you are thinking at the time, your feelings act as an indicator.

Feelings

If you feel good (happy, contented, enthusiastic, inspired etc) then that feeling indicates that your current thinking is reliable and trustworthy. It's worth your attention.

Conversely, when you feel bad (anything other than good) that feeling indicates that your thinking is unhelpful and untrustworthy so you might not want to give it any more attention.

This is not about suppressing feelings or forcing your thoughts. It is simply being aware what is going on. That awareness gives you the choice whether to continue with your current thinking by giving it more attention or dropping it. Either way, the choice is yours.

What I find is that being aware of how my experience is brought to life from whatever I'm thinking at the time actually changes the relationship I have with my own thinking. I don't have to identify with it; I don't have to take it seriously; I don't have to act on it. I can choose.

The Flow of Thought

You know that in a typical day you have thousands of thoughts that come and go. As your thoughts change, your experience will change too. Moment by moment your experience will follow the changes in your thinking. So it's natural that your feelings will fluctuate; they can change very quickly.

No doubt, many of the thoughts you think are those you have thought before. Some are welcome, others less so. Either way they spring from your accumulated knowledge and experience. But what about new thoughts, thoughts you have never thought before?

You can imagine that thoughts flow like a river. The river can be a steady flow so that your mind is occupied with a stream of thoughts. If you've ever tried to write down this 'stream of consciousness' you'll know just how much mental activity is going on, how quickly thoughts come and go.

We often add to the flow by thinking a lot about our thinking – analysing, ruminating and judging. This can cause the river to flood and your mind becomes inundated with too much thinking, so you feel stress and tension.

Taken a stage further, you may create so much extra thinking that you encounter a whirlpool in the river. Your mind is overwhelmed with thinking and you experience a feeling of panic.

Other times the river can become a gentle trickle. Then your mind is quieter and you can watch each thought drift by without getting involved with it. This is the meditative state and it feels really nice. It's a sort of relaxed alertness.

All this talk about a river begs the question: where does the water come from? In other words, where do thoughts come from?

The Source

Some people claim that new thoughts bubble up from the unconscious mind but this is not very convincing. It implies that every new thought we have ever had and will ever have is already there.

Another attempt to explain where thoughts come from rests on the description of how the brain works by making new neural connections. But while this explains the biological changes that take place, it does not account for the origin of new thought.

In contrast, many spiritual traditions describe some kind of universal source of thought. They use different words – such as collective consciousness, divine mind, universal intelligence, life energy, God – all of which attempt to point to the ever-present but formless source of thought.

From this source, formless life-energy can take on particular form. This form is the content of the thoughts that enter our mind. Because the source is infinite, it gives us the potential for unlimited new thoughts.

Personal Effectiveness

As we have seen, when a thought arrives we can give it attention or not. If we choose to give it attention then we ‘think’ more about it. We increase our mental load - we ponder, consider, analyse, judge and ruminate. Sometimes, of course, this is entirely appropriate but much of the time it is unnecessary and counter-productive.

When our mental load is low – our mind is quiet – then we have space for fresh thoughts to arrive from the source. This is how we can draw on an intelligence bigger than our own – indeed the intelligence behind all life! This is the true source of inspiration.

Check this against your own experience. Think back to when you had a great idea out of the blue. It was just the idea you needed yet you hadn't been thinking about it – your mind was relatively quiet. You were probably doing something completely unrelated and, hey presto, there was the bright idea. This is your flair for success in action.

This sort of experience is so common that people report ‘shower moments’ because they often get their best ideas in the shower – that is,

when they have switched off their mental effort and they are doing something simple and relaxing.

Our personal effectiveness is related to our mental load. If we have too much on our mind, our effectiveness goes down because we are distracted, pre-occupied or diverted from whatever we are doing and we cut ourselves off from the source of fresh thinking – the very source of inspiration and solutions that we need. And to top it all, with too much on our mind we feel pretty rubbish too.

The Reason Behind Goals

Whether you consciously set goals or not, you have certain aims in life. There are things you pursue and things you avoid. When you look around at your fellow travellers on this Earth, you see the same for them.

Think for a moment about the variety – goals to lose weight and to gain money; to start relationships and to end relationships; to move forward in a career or to move back to a simpler life; to take on a fresh challenge or to find a nourishing retreat, and so on.

But behind every goal there is the same ultimate aim. The reason behind all of them is to get more good feelings (which is equivalent to less bad feelings).

When you look at your own life, if you pick one of your goals and trace the reason why you chose it in the first place, isn't it because ultimately you want to feel good?

The thing is that we now know our feelings are a direct result of our thinking. So while achieving any particular goal is not a guaranteed way to feel good, there is something better.

Your Natural Well-Being

How do you feel when you have nothing much on your mind? This doesn't have to be an empty mind (though it might) but one where the flow is a gentle trickle and you are not engaged with any particular thought.

Notice that this is entirely independent from your circumstances. It does not rely on you having solved all your problems or having achieved everything on your 'To Do' list. It simply means that you are not thinking about any of it so your mind is just idling. It's the meditative state we met earlier.

People report the good feeling in different words – peaceful, contented, happy, satisfied, relaxed, and so on. You will have your own description but whatever it is, the feeling is good because you are in touch with your natural well-being.

Your natural well-being is always there. And it always carries that good feeling. When it seems to have disappeared it has become hidden behind a load of thinking. You will always return to it automatically when your mind is quieter. Well-being is your default setting.

A Quiet Mind

Now you may be wondering how you can quieten your mind. Well, you can't *make* it happen but you can *let* it happen. You can't do it by will-power because the effort just generates more thinking which takes you away from the quiet mind you are after.

Some people allow their mind to quieten by meditating. When I learned to meditate, I remember my teacher telling me that if I was making an effort I was doing it wrong. I meditated every day for several years and some days my mind became really quiet and I felt absolutely great.

But I came to understand that it wasn't the particular practice of meditation that brought the feeling of well-being but it was a quiet mind. I realized that, potentially, I could have a quiet mind anywhere.

This explained why I connected with that feeling of well-being in other places, doing other things. It also explained the anomalies – how I could experience profound well-being in utterly mundane surroundings. The same, of course, is true for you.

Getting Practical

So what are the practical implications of all of this? How does this new understanding of how our experience is actually created actually bring greater success and well-being?

The first thing to say is that when we take a practical focus, it does not mean making a list of things to do. Neither is it about the effort of using particular tools or techniques. Rather than trying to manipulate circumstances or manage your state of mind (un-burning the biscuits), you can allow your new understanding to play out.

Getting practical means being aware in a particular context as to what is really going on, specifically how your thoughts are creating your experience. With this awareness you will automatically make different choices which, in turn, will lead to better results.

As we have seen, when you think less about your thinking, you have less mental load and there is room for the flow of fresh thoughts. You have access to the intelligence behind all life, the infinite source of inspiration.

Because we are conditioned to equate effort with success – the ‘no pain, no gain’ school of thinking – it may seem like a step of faith to rely simply on your new understanding to lead to the results you want.

But a moment’s reflection tells you that the car will not go an atom faster despite all the effort applied to the throttle when you have much effort pressing the brake! Understanding the system is the secret to success. So here I urge you to experiment and test this understanding in your own life.

Next we’re going on to focus on three main areas of life:

- creating solutions to problems that you are stuck with
- finding the right path through difficult decisions
- experiencing a much greater sense of well-being

It’s also worth emphasising that your new understanding of the inside-out origin of experience can bring positive changes in any area of your life.

Solving Problems

It seems that problems are an inherent part of life; we all experience them. Some problems appear bigger than others and press us for a solution. Your biggest problem right now is likely to be frustrating and stressful. So how can you use your natural ability to create a solution?

Let's use a typical example from the work context (although what follows applies to any problem). Alex has a problem with his boss Lyn. The relationship is difficult because Alex finds that Lyn spends only 15 minutes with him each week and in those brief meetings she doesn't seem to listen but talks instead.

The first thing to notice is a crucial distinction. Lyn's behaviour is a fact while the problem Alex experiences with that behaviour is individual to him. Lyn shows the same behavior to Alex's colleagues but they don't necessarily find it a problem.

Problems are not objective facts; they are subjective experiences

Because, as we've seen, all our experiences are created by the thoughts we are thinking at the time, to experience a problem means that you have to be thinking a certain way.

You already know that when something 'takes your mind off it' the experience of your problem temporarily goes away. Only when you start to think about it again does the problem become real once more.

And we do spend a lot of time thinking about our problems. The main reason is that we live with a pervasive and misleading myth. We are educated to believe that problems are best solved by thinking a lot about them.

But now we can see that it's obvious that the solution cannot lie within the thinking that creates the experience of a problem. If you keep thinking problem thoughts, the problem just gets bigger! This is at the heart of the well-known quote from Albert Einstein:

*No problem can be solved from
the same level of consciousness that created it*

If we keep thinking about the problem, it's so easy to go round in circles or spirals, repeatedly rethinking what we've thought before. But the solution can only come from new thinking. This is what inspiration is – the revitalising experience of new thinking. So the question is: how do we get new thinking?

New Thinking, New Feeling

You can rely on your natural flair because new thoughts will always come to you when you stop crowding your mind with old thoughts. So if you want a solution to your problem, give your mind a break. This means a proper break, not simply moving on to think about another problem.

You could start the break by framing a question such as: how can I best deal with the behaviour my boss is showing? And then leave it alone; go and do something completely different, preferably something you know does not need lots of thinking.

As your mind becomes less busy, new thoughts will begin to occur to you. You can let them arrive without over-analysing them, as if you're watching them pass by. Thoughts are always flowing so when you stop obsessing on what you are already thinking, the natural flow will feed new thoughts into your mind as you let go of the old ones.

Remember that your feelings are an excellent indicator. When your thinking becomes heavy and sluggish, it's time to take a break. The law of diminishing returns applies– why spend all day slogging away when 20 minutes of creative work is much more productive?

You will recognise the solution thoughts by the good feelings that come with them - feelings often referred to as heart-warming or gut instinct.

Perhaps you can remember a previous occasion when you found a solution to a problem like this. At the time you may not have been aware that you were using the mechanism described here but you can be sure that all the 'circuits' are present. Your natural gift for creating a solution is just waiting to be activated!

In A Nutshell

- A solution can only come from new thinking, not what you already know
- New thoughts will arrive when your mind is quieter
- Good feelings tell you that your thinking is trustworthy

Making Difficult Decisions

Sometimes it is really hard to make the right decision. Essentially a decision is a choice and sometimes choosing difficult.

We are all familiar with indecision – the pendulum that swings between ‘shall I?’ and ‘shan’t I?’ This ping-pong thinking can be very draining, especially if it continues for a significant time.

Over-thinking just increases the turbulence in your mind – it’s like spinning your wheels and getting nowhere.

Decisions can be difficult for a number of typical reasons:

1. There seems to be a bewildering number of choices. It’s difficult to evaluate them all properly so you can choose the best option
2. All the options seem to have equal merit so it is impossible to distinguish the right decision
3. You are faced with a dilemma – choosing one option will automatically exclude something you really want
4. The decision involves taking into account people who have conflicting views
5. The option you really would like to choose is unavailable
6. You cannot predict the future so knowing which is the best option is impossible

Decisions like these need something different from intellectual analysis. They need to draw on a deeper wisdom, the wisdom that comes from connection with the Source - the intelligence of life behind all our thoughts.

Wisdom

Your wisdom is like a flute playing in an orchestra. As long as the rest of the orchestra is making a lot of noise it's impossible to hear the flute, even though it is playing all the time. But when the orchestra is quiet the flute can be heard quite clearly.

When you give up on all the mental noise and your mind quietens, your wisdom will be heard. Your wisdom can also be felt. You know that your feelings are a guide to trustworthy thoughts. A good decision will have an associated good feeling.

Wisdom will not be rushed, not because it is shy but because the experience of rushing comes from a busy mind. Patience is not about enduring a prolonged wait but refraining from stirring up busy thoughts which only drown out the flute.

In making your decision, remember that the best option may not yet be visible to you. With a quieter mind you will see new options (see previous section on Problem Solving).

Also with a quieter mind, much of the perceived complexity of the decision will fall away and clarity will emerge so that the right choice becomes more obvious.

In A Nutshell

- The best decision will come from your wisdom rather than intellectual analysis
- Your wisdom is always with you and is accompanied by a good feeling
- The flute of wisdom can be heard when the orchestra is quiet

Greater Well-Being

As we touched on earlier, greater well-being is the ultimate goal. The reason behind all other goals is to get more good feelings (which is equivalent to less bad feelings).

When we really see that our experiences can only come from our thinking, we are liberated from trying to control or manipulate outside circumstances so we can feel good. No longer do we have to get the world around us to conform to our wishes simply so that we can feel OK. Phew!

Instead, as we saw earlier, we can know that our well-being is always with us. It's our default condition which we automatically return to when our mind is quieter.

But don't make this a stick to beat yourself with; don't set impossible standards. We are all human so when you are feeling anything other than good, be kind to yourself.

Low Moods

When you feel low, it doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you – there's a certain inevitability that feelings will go up and down. Low moods are caused by certain thoughts - especially habitual thinking – but if you don't fuel those thoughts with your attention, they will fade. New thoughts and hence a new experience will take their place.

Remember that all things pass – the natural river-like flow of thought makes this inevitable. The low feeling is a useful signal not to take your current thoughts seriously; they are not trustworthy so don't act of them.

Sometimes when I feel low, I'm not even consciously aware of what my thoughts are. Previously this would have driven me to search for them to try and tease out their meaning. This would usually make me feel worse because I was generating a whole load more thinking. Then I would look for likely causes and then try to make a plan of action just when I was least able to think clearly!

Now I realize that I don't need to know what the thoughts are – the feeling is the only guide I need. It's a great relief to not have work at the situation and instead know that it will pass by itself, all the quicker for me not interfering.

Sometimes when I recognize a low mood coming on, I'll choose to change what I'm doing. Going for a walk is my favourite option and often I feel better at the end of it. But I know it isn't the walk itself that makes the difference but the fact that my thinking changes.

It reminds me of a story that a reader of my blog once told me. She remembered when she was a child her mother would sometimes grab her hat and coat and leave the house and jump on a bus into town. It was only in later life that she came to realize that this was her mother's response to a low mood.

Again, it wasn't the bus ride or the shops in town that lifted mother's mood. That happened automatically when her thinking changed.

Natural Variations

As you become more aware of the variations in your own mood, you can match your action to it. When you feel good, you can use your high state of mind to the full and take your risky and ambitious actions, tackle your challenges and stretch your talents. When you feel low, you can do the more routine and less demanding things until the mood passes.

The brilliant thing is that when you understand what is really going on, low moods don't seem so scary and they seem to pass quicker. It's like a personal weather system – you get to make the most of the rainy days as well as the sunshine.

In A Nutshell

- There's nothing broken or needing to be fixed; your well-being is your default state
- You don't need to get the world around you to conform to your wishes so that you can feel good
- Variation in mood is a natural part of the human experience

Next Steps

What you have read here and reflected on may be very different to what you've seen before. It was to me when I first came across it. You might be asking yourself, 'OK, what do I do now?'

Actually there isn't anything you have to do. A new understanding is all you need. As your understanding grows, by noticing it at play in your own life, positive changes will follow. It's quite magical.

- You can follow my **blog** which is <http://www.inspiration-at-work.co.uk/blog/>
- If you would like support to **make changes in your own life**, I do work with individuals one-to-one. To find out more, please drop me a confidential email trevor@inspiration-at-work.co.uk
- I also run 'Inspiration at Work' **seminars**, which are tailored for specific organisations and other interested groups. If you would like to explore options on this, please email me trevor@inspiration-at-work.co.uk

Final Words

- Inspiration is the revitalising experience of fresh thinking
- Inspiration ignites your latent powers, your flair for success
- The source of inspiration is the infinite intelligence behind all life (including you!)
- Becoming inspired is not a process of intellect or will-power
- You naturally become inspired when your mind is quiet
- It can only ever be busy-thinking that can keep you from your source of inspiration