**Another Dimension**

1

Mostly in life we try to do GOOD, to be GOOD.

Sometimes though, all of us do something BAD. This doesn't mean we're bad people - but at times we just can't seem to stop ourselves from doing BAD.

2

Mostly though, we aim to do GOOD.

And why is that important? Well, the way we seem to see it is that doing GOOD is the RIGHT thing. Which means of course that doing BAD is the WRONG thing to do.

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Why do we do this dichotomizing so easily? Evolution requires simple choices between say two foods, one that is poisonous and one that is nutritious. The poisonous one causes death which is BAD and the other one doesn’t which is GOOD. And since you can’t be both alive and dead simultaneously, our choices have dichotomous outcomes.

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The dichotomizing process is strengthened in the repertoire of humans by:

1 Modeling

2 Pliance “Be Good”

3 Augmenting: “What’s Wrong?”

4 and massed practice

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Here’s an example you’ve all seen. Most people try to be NICE and avoid being NASTY, because NICE is GOOD and RIGHT and NASTY is BAD and WRONG. So you try to make sure your actions and deeds are NICE as often as you can.

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BUT because you’re human you sometimes end up doing something NASTY even when you didn’t mean to. And when you notice that you go back to doing NICE things.

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I’ve noticed though that the people doing this NICE stuff aren’t happy.

And that’s WRONG isn't it? One of two things seems to happen:

1) While you’re busy being NICE, some people are being NASTY and doing BAD things to you even while you’re doing GOOD things to them and that’s not RIGHT, so you feel BAD.

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Or 2) You notice that sometimes you did something NASTY when you were supposed to be being NICE and because your mind knows that’s BAD it reminds of you of it so that you won’t be BAD at being GOOD again.

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BUT remembering it gives you BAD feelings like shame guilt and anger towards yourself which isn’t NICE and now you’re supposed to be NICE to everyone else when your mind isn’t being NICE to you. It seems like something is missing…

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Well, here’s The Thing, people are doing all this GOOD and RIGHT and NICE stuff, but they’re telling me that life is empty, boring, frustrating and lacking in vitality or purpose. So what do you do when you discover this?

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\*You try harder – because trying is always the RIGHT thing to do

\*You do more of the RIGHT things

\*Or you try to do fewer of the BAD things – and the problem with that is you're now focused on the WRONG Thing.

Life becomes just one damn THING after another

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So the only thing left is to assume that you have been dichotomizing in the WRONG way, because what you’ve been thinking was GOOD was actually BAD and what you thought was RIGHT was WRONG, and now you’ve got to get GOOD at telling RIGHT from WRONG and when you do that you’ll be GOOD, RIGHT?

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Well that’s not it. This is it. You need to use Another Dimension. Let’s say this dimension differentiates between what works and what doesn’t.

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You can call it workability, values, what matters, what gives meaning or purpose, what is important to you.

And now you have different questions to answer than who or what is right or wrong, good or bad.

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Questions like

What do you really care about?

What do you want your life to be about?

Who or what matters to you?

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And we can even erase this horizontal dimension and evaluate our actions on the basis of whether they work, or how consistent they are with our values.

Then you can stop doing what doesn’t work.

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I've used this tool for five years now, and I've seen clients change the way they approach their lives by shifting their  orientation from trying to avoid ending up HERE, to pursuing a life that they can LOVE.

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For example, the divorced father who gradually moved from arguing with his ex-wife in the service of avoiding humiliation and feeling controlled, to choosing his actions based on who he wanted to be in the eyes of his children.

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For example, the lawyer who in the service of her value of justice, chose integrity and thoroughness as benchmarks for her written opinions, rather than maximum billable hours and avoiding the disapproval of her partners.

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So, could you introduce another dimension to your acceptance and commitment therapy interventions?

Two dimensions might give you greater flexibility than one.

And by the way, why stop at two?