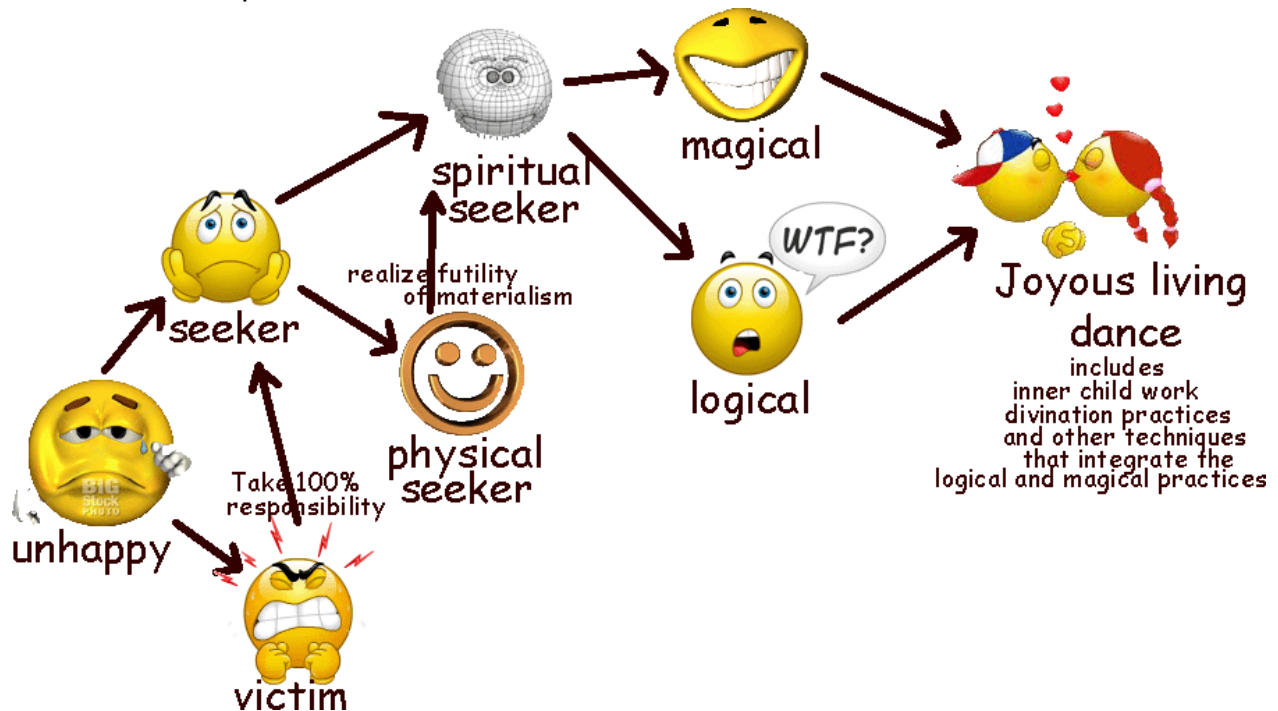


## A PATH TO JOYOUS LIVING by Vally D'Souza

My favorite quote from Dalai Lama is “I believe that the very purpose of life is to be happy.” The question that comes up for me immediately is that “Then why aren’t we happy? or how can we have a truly joyous happy life?” Here is my exploratory analysis of this topic.

It is widely believed in my spiritual circles that we come into to this world to give and receive love. But the circumstances in which we find ourselves when we arrive here (including parents and a society who have their own agenda) forces us to develop an emotional and spiritual armor around us as a survival mechanism. This armor which was necessary for survival in the developing stages of our psyche begins to prevent us from having an ecstatically joyous life in our adult years. Thus, developing a lifestyle which enhances dissolution of the armor and increases the porosity of heart can lead us to have an ecstatically joyous life. The next question that comes up for me then is “How do we go from where we are now (presumably in a unhappy state affairs) to where we need to be to experience life in this manner?”



Here is my analysis (perhaps simple minded) of a path leading us to this joyful state of consciousness. It assumes that we are currently in a unhappy state of mind and maps out a path as shown in the diagram above that that will allow us to have a joyous life.<sup>1</sup> This is the path that Treehouse ministry espouses to teach and Treehouse ministry can play a part in that journey in our life.

As depicted in the figure above, when we are unhappy, there are two paths we normally take. 1. Victim and 2. Seaker

**Victim:** Victim is the one who is always complaining about how bad things are in his/her life. S/he is unwilling to take responsibility for his/her feelings and blames everyone and everything around him/her for his/her misery. S/he often finds validation for his/her victim-hood from other like minded people. This temporarily gives him/her some relief and s/he becomes addicted to victim-hood. A way out of this endless cycle of victim-hood is awareness<sup>2</sup>. One cannot fight victim-hood but if one becomes aware that one is in her/his victim-hood, it becomes easier with proper intentions to get out of this state of mind. Very often, meeting a with a holy person, reading a book or some mystical event can trigger reversal of this state but until a person has decided to take 100% responsibility for ones own feelings, it is difficult to get out of this state. Once one has decided to take 100% responsibility for ones feelings, one can then begin to seek ways of being happy and become a seeker.

**Seekers:** As depicted in the figure above, seekers generally take one of two paths: 1. Physical and 2. Spiritual.

**Physical seekers:** Physical seekers seek physical relief in the form of “ism” - workaholics, shopaholics and all those who seek relief from their unhappiness in the materialistic and physical realm fall into this category. Once again, those who find themselves in this state can find their escape if they so desire through awareness. Richard Rohr proposes that if you find yourself in a certain state, do not fight it, embrace it and when you are filled up to the brim with this, universe will find a way to bump you up. Perhaps if that does not happen in this life time, it may happen in the next. But, if you become aware of your materialistic nature and embrace it, you run the danger of loosing it. I strongly recommend “Busting loose from the Money Game” for a very interesting discussion on this topic.<sup>3</sup> If one decides to bust loose from the money game and realize that this materialistic world does not hold the life they want to experience, then one can begin his to seek for happiness in the spiritual realm and become a spiritual seeker.

**Spiritual seekers:** Spiritual seekers can be categorized in two forms 1. Magical and 2. Logical. Before I describe these two categories, I want to propose that true ecstatically joyful life can be achieved only by a individualized and balanced integration of our personal magical and logical beings.

**Logical seeker:** Logical seekers are those who need to understand how everything works in great detail and try to map out a logical path to happiness. They are voracious reader of self help book, they generally know everything that is wrong with them and attend most of the seminars by self help gurus. A story that Sr. Cecelia, the founder of Tree house Ministries likes tell is that if there are two doors one marked “Heaven” and the other marked “Seminar about Heaven” we all know which one the logical seeker

would take. My contention is that spiritual practices without the magical and mystical aspect is akin to eating grapes without its juice.

**Magical Seekers:** Strict magical seekers often live in a magical world. They have trouble navigating the physical world. They fail to understand why bills need to be paid in time and why no one else in the this planet can understand them or see the magic that they see. There is a popular story of a man in a small town who went to the top of his roof and started praying to God for help when the town began to flood. The water rose up and authorities sent officers to ask the man to follow evacuation protocols. He refused and said “God will rescue me. I do not need your help”. As the water arose, they sent a boat to rescue this man and he refused. Finally, as the water came up to his neck, they sent a helicopter to rescue him and again he refused. He died in the flood and went up to the pearly gates and complained passionately saying “I put my trust in You and how could You betray me”. The woman up there in the white sari smiled gently and said, “I sent you help three times and what more could I do?”

I propose that in order for us to have a joyous life, we need to use our talents to navigate through this physical world which follows physical laws (and laws of physics). I can hear God saying, “I have given you a brain, figure it out.” We need to understand why we do what we do and how can we do it in a way that does not interfere with our magic. If we understand deeply that we are spiritual beings that are having a human experience and our physical self is a custodian of the this incredible spirit, then have a responsibility to connect deeply with this spirit and recognize the type of experiences that it wants to have. It should be considered a sacred privilege for our physical self to remove obstacles that may be in the way of experiencing life as our spirit wants us to. This what I call living our souls journey and it truly is an ecstatically joyous life.

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**Endnotes:**

1. This analysis may seem dualistic to more enlightened readers but it is only by understanding and embracing our dualistic nature can we understand and achieve non-duality as shown in the final stage of this analysis.
2. I strongly recommend a book by Anthony De Mello entitle “Awareness” for a fascinating treatise on this subject.
3. Busting Loose From the Money Game; Robert Scheinfeld (Author)