

LESSON 19 • JANUARY 19

“I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To teach you that all minds are joined. Despite being initially unwelcome, this idea must be true for salvation to be possible.

Exercise: Three or four (at least three), for one minute or so (shorter if necessary).

- Close your eyes and repeat the idea.
- Search your mind carefully for the thoughts it contains now. As you consider each one in turn, hold it in your mind and say, “*I am not alone in experiencing the effects of this thought about [name central person or theme of thought].*”

Remarks: Today’s lesson includes the last major mention of a theme that is quite familiar by now: the need to be indiscriminate and random in selecting practice subjects. These early lessons have drilled this into us (it has been mentioned in every lesson except 8, 13, and 14), and so in this lesson the author announces that he will no longer emphasize it. This is not because it is no longer relevant, but because he expects that we have internalized it by now. He now expects us to maintain this practice throughout the rest of the Workbook. He also mentions why it is so important. Being able to apply the idea just as easily to our partner’s body as to a speck on the floor will ultimately enable us to heal cancer just as easily as a cold.

Response to temptation: As needed.

Apply the idea in response to any unwanted thought. Just realizing that this thought affects everyone will help you let it go.

Commentary

Yesterday it was about seeing; today about thinking. “Thinking and its results are really simultaneous, for cause and effect are never separate” (1:4). Thinking is cause; seeing is effect, and they are simultaneous. A baseball flying through your window causes the glass to be broken. Which happens first? The baseball passing through the plane of the glass, or the glass breaking? Obviously both happen at once.

So it is with thinking and seeing. When we think, we perceive. The simultaneity is part of what makes it so difficult for us to recognize thought as the cause. It is fairly easy for the ego to play the trick of reversing cause and effect, so that we believe that what we see is the cause of what we think. But that isn’t the way it works at all.

The idea that minds are joined is exciting, but also, especially at first, quite threatening. There are thoughts I have that I do not want to have shared, but “there are no private thoughts” (2:3). My “private” thoughts affect everyone and everything just as every thought does that engages my mind. The idea can be disconcerting. The lesson tells us that despite resistance, eventually we will all recognize that the idea—of joined minds in which no thought is private—is inevitable “if salvation is possible at all” (2:4). It does not explain why it is inevitable, but just says that we’ll all see it that way before long.

Let’s think about it for a minute. If other minds are truly separate from mine, then different wills are also truly possible. That places me in competition with the world, alone against the universe. How can I then be free from fear, if outside forces can at any moment turn against me in vicious attack?

If, however, minds are joined, and if what I think affects all of this unified mind, then salvation is possible. Then one choice for peace can affect the entire joined mind towards peace.

Salvation is possible; I am not an effect of the world, but the world is my effect. I am empowered to choose. I can choose peace for all of Mind. This is how, in the Course's view of things, I can become a savior of the world.

Let me then determine this day to choose for peace, for healing, and for forgiveness. As I begin to realize that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts, I will begin to care about what I think, and as I begin to care, I will begin to heal myself and the world along with me.