

**SEVEN
PRINCIPLES
FOR
HAPPINESS**

**Fulfilling the
Promise of Your Life**

William Yoder, Ph.D., D.C.

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Seven Principles for Happiness

Fulfilling the Promise of Your Life

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness is the promise and the goal of life. Happiness is much more than just a fleeting sense of feeling good. It includes feelings of fulfillment and deep satisfaction, the excitement of passionately pursuing and realizing your dreams, the deep peace of your innermost being, and the joy of unconditionally giving and receiving love.

The source of all life *is* love. This idea is echoed in virtually every spiritual tradition. It means that the source of all life is the infinite eternal creative potential for well-being. This infinite and ever-expanding creative energy manifests itself as the happy movement of life toward further happiness. Our happiness *is* the on-going fulfillment and completion of life's creative power.

The purpose of our lives is to allow the love that is the source of all life to manifest clearly in our lives, and to extend through our lives into the lives of others. The creative power of the source of all life expresses itself as happiness and as the experience of well-being. Our role in this creative process is to choose thoughts of love and joy that allow our minds to manifest the loving power of life, and to not indulge in those that restrict our minds and deny or distort the expression of life.

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Some may argue that such a vision of human life is too positive and is unrealistic. They would argue that the ideal of perfect happiness is impossible given all of the “imperfections” of human life on earth. They would argue that to pursue happiness as a purpose or a goal would be self-deluding and dishonest at best, and selfish and morally irresponsible at worst.

These and other similar objections sometimes masquerade as self-evident common sense truths. But they are actually based on certain belief choices about the essence and nature of life—belief choices that are so taken for granted that they no longer seem to be belief choices at all.

These seven “principles” of happiness are seven ideas or belief choices that together form an overall belief system, which offers us an alternative way to look at the world. How you look at something determines what you see and how you see it. Experiencing our lives through the seven principles in this book can provide a foundation for a different kind of happiness than the limited and relative kind of happiness we often feel we must settle for.

These are not the only possible principles of happiness, and it may not be necessary to believe any or all of them in order to live a happy life. Perhaps being happy is as simple as just choosing to be happy. Maybe all you have to do is to follow your own inner guidance in order to be truly happy and to help others discover their own true happiness.

But when we have hidden this inner knowing under misleading beliefs, then we may need alternative ideas to help us undo those self-deceptive beliefs. The only time we need any principles of happiness is when we are unhappy. These seven principles of happiness could also be called seven principles of healing. They help us to undo those belief choices that make us unhappy, and to replace them with belief choices that allow our inner nature of happiness to shine forth. They help us to heal our experience of un-well-being, and allow us to experience our underlying truth of perfect well-being.

There is nothing “wrong” with being unhappy or with experiencing un-well-being in our lives. It is never a matter of blaming someone for her unhappiness or lack of well-being, nor do I mean that anyone “should” be happier or experience more well-being in her life. But happiness is a more pleasant and healthier way to live our lives, a more effective way to realize our dreams. And it may also be the greatest contribution we can make to the lives of others.

These seven principles are not presented as “the ultimate truth.” Whatever “ultimate truth” may mean, I don’t believe that it refers to a theory or a thought system. These principles, however, can serve as a useful tool or vehicle to help us discover and maintain a deeper and more consistent level of happiness in our lives. There is no one way that is right for everyone. But the real question is, will these seven principles help *you*?





PRINCIPLE ONE



ONE POWER

*There is only one power. That power is the
infinite eternal creative potential for
ever-expanding well-being.*



This first principle is perhaps the single most important belief choice that you can make for your own happiness.

But before explaining this first principle, a few introductory remarks will be helpful.

Every thought system starts with a foundational principle. That principle is what gives the rest of the ideas their coherence, so that they form a thought “system.” Typically, the foundational principle is the deepest idea of the thought system, and you can comprehend its full meaning only after you see all of its implications in the other principles.

In this first section, the discussion may seem somewhat abstract. But as we move forward, you will see the relevance of this idea to your daily life.

This book is intended to be practical. Its ideas and theories are not meant to be some kind of accurate metaphysical description of “how things really are.” They are offered as a guide for how to live our lives and interact with the world in a way that makes our life experience happier and more fulfilling.

The first principle is the belief that there is *only one power*. In other words, there is only one source or one cause of all that is.

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Furthermore, this one power is not a neutral power, like the power of a battery. It is not simply the power or potential for anything at all. The one power of this first principle has a specific quality. We can characterize this one source as *the infinite eternal creative potential for ever-expanding well-being*.

Well-being here includes well-being in every area of life experience: peace, joy, abundance, harmony, fullness, and wholeness. Another way to express this is that *the source is love*, pure positive energy, eternally expressing itself as ever-expanding well-being. This infinite eternal creative flow or thrust toward ever-expanding goodness is the essence and truth of all reality, and the essence and truth of every now.

To say that this one power is creative means that source, in its own nature, is eternally creating, eternally expanding itself. Source includes its creative expressions as part of its being. Source, in its own nature, *is* the creative potential, the creating, and the creative expressions. And beyond source (which includes its creating and its creative expressions), there is nothing.

This doesn't mean that there is some limit to source, and that just beyond that limit we would find some vast empty space. It means that beyond source there is nothing, nothing at all. There *is* only source. Source is the very foundation, essence and truth of is-ness itself.

Source “creates” by extending or sharing itself. That means that everything-that-is is an extension of this source—to *be*

means to be an expression of source. Since source is love, everything-that-is is an expression of love. Everything and everyone shares the same truth, the same essence, the same content: love.

Some people prefer to call this one power, this one source, by the name of “God.” But I am choosing here to use the more neutral term “source,” because “God” is often understood to mean a separate transcendent being, which is separate from the world and from ourselves.

The “one power” or “one source” of the first principle, however, is not a “being” at all. Rather it is more like the very Being-ness of all beings, the very is-ness of all that is. Source is not separate from beings. Source creatively expresses itself *as* beings, and beings *are* the extensions of source.

This idea of source might correspond to a more mystical or non-dualistic conception of God. But it would not be synonymous with the “God” of any dualistic thought system of “God plus something else” (for instance, God and the world, or God and you). Source, as we are using the term, means that beyond which there is nothing. And so there is no “something else” it could possibly be separate from.

The creative process of extension that gives rise to everything-that-is is eternal. In this context, “eternal” does not mean lasting a long long time into some distant forever. Here, “eternal” means *always already now*. Creation is not some event in the distant past, nor is your own creation an event that happened

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20 or 30 or 60 years ago. This first principle implies that you are being “created” or “sourced” now, moment by moment. Your very being *is* an extending-forth of the one source now.

This means that you, in your very truth, are a be-ing of the infinite potential for well-being, a be-ing of pure positive energy, a be-ing of the creative expansion of Love. I am using the hyphenated spelling of “be-ing” to emphasize that you are a creative *process* rather than a mere thing. Your very be-ing is an individualized expression of the eternal creative process of the very lov-ing of Love Itself—the on-going extending-forth of peace, joy, and well-being. This is your eternal truth and essence, even when your thoughts and beliefs hide it from your own awareness.

The Experience of Contrast and Difference

The principle of one power seems to fly in the face of our everyday experience. We experience a world of contrasts and differences. Our bodily senses perceive only by contrast—for instance, you can see the bright star only against the black sky. Our conceptual thinking is based on difference—to “de-fine” something means to draw a boundary between what it is and what it is not.

We experience a world of abundance *and* lack, of health *and* sickness, of peace *and* conflict, of happiness *and* unhappiness. In short, we experience a world that seems to be driven by

two powers: a power for good and a power for bad, a power for well-being and a power for un-well-being. Furthermore, we also experience a world that seems to be made up of two different kinds of reality: for instance, mind and body, the inner world and the outer world, spirit and matter. And each reality seems to have its own independent power.

Our experience of difference and contrast is reflected as a pervasive sense of conflict and struggle in our lives that takes many forms. Since we experience ourselves as separate and different from everything else, we tend to experience our lives as an on-going battle between ourselves and others—a battle of trying to get what we want from others, and trying to defend ourselves when others try to take from us. We may experience an on-going struggle with the world—for instance, a struggle against adverse political and economic forces, or a struggle against bacteria and viruses and other forces of disease. We may even experience a struggle with our own bodies, when a sick or failing body seems to make us suffer, and keeps us from enjoying our lives and doing what we want.

We may experience this difference and contrast in our lives as a conflict between the forces of good and evil. Sometimes this may take the form of battling the forces of evil in the world. Other times, it may take the form of an inner battle between your desire to be forgiving and loving, and the temptation to do or say something unkind when outer forces seem to push you to your limits.

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Our sense of conflict can give rise to a feeling of guilt or shame. When we see the world in terms of conflict and competition between ourselves and others, it seems necessary to sometimes attack others, either to defend ourselves or to get what we need. When we give in to the temptation to lash out and be hurtful, or the temptation to get something for ourselves at the expense of another, we feel uneasy. We may feel a sense of guilt or shame for simply entertaining selfish or greedy or unkind thoughts, even if we don't act them out. Some religions actually promote a sense of guilt, claiming that you are indeed "sinful" and separate from God and thus you "should" feel guilty. For those religions, acknowledging and owning your own "truth of guilt" is the necessary first step in your religious journey of "salvation."

The pervasive sense of conflict also gives rise to an on-going undercurrent of fear. There is the fear that another might triumph over you; the fear that you might triumph over another (and thus be guilty); the fear that you might not get what you need; the fear that you might get what you don't want; the fear that you might lose what you have; the fear of some kind of punishment or karmic repayment for your mistakes and failings; the fear of loss and lack, sickness and injury; and ultimately, the fear of death (and perhaps even the fear of some form of punishment or damnation after death).

Of course, most of us do not feel embattled all of the time. We don't feel a continuous sense of guilt and fear. We do have

our happy moments, our times of loving, and our experiences of beauty. But these experiences occur within the context of their opposites. Within a world of two powers, each moment of peace is only a temporary and tenuous hiatus in the overall battle of life.

We tend to resign ourselves to this sense of conflict and guilt and fear. We tell ourselves, “you have to take the bad with the good, the thorns with the roses.” We even rationalize our experience of contrast and argue that it has positive value. We say, “you couldn’t really appreciate a sunny day unless you had rainy ones.”

The Question of the "Reality of Evil"

We do in fact find ourselves in the midst of a life experience defined by contrast and difference, a life experience of a mixture of good and bad, of well-being and un-well-being. In theological terms, you could say that we find ourselves in the midst of experiencing a mixture of both the Godly and the ungodly in our lives. Within this context of experience, a crucial question to ask ourselves is how will we *choose to* interpret our perceptions of badness—our perceptions of evil, of being unfairly treated, of loss and lack, of sickness and pain, of death.

Basically, we have two alternatives. We could choose to interpret our perceptions of the bad (evil, harm, pain, sickness, lack, etc.) in our lives as true perceptions of a real power for

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badness. This would be an expression of what we called the belief in two powers.

Or, we could choose to believe in one power. We could choose to understand every perception of badness as merely the temporary hiddenness of the underlying truth of goodness. We could choose to understand every perception of badness as merely a temporary distortion in our experience caused by our own limited and limiting ideas of goodness—ultimately, a distortion caused by our choice to believe in two powers.

But wouldn't it be foolishly one-sided to believe in only one power? If you chose to believe only in the reality of good, and not in the reality of bad, wouldn't you merely be hiding half of the truth from yourself? Wouldn't you be a simplistic and naive person who ignored the harsh truths of life and saw everything through rose-colored glasses?

There is no simple answer to this objection. If there really were two powers, then to merely ignore one of them would indeed be one-sided, and would hide half of the truth from yourself. But if there really were only one power, then to believe in two powers would be to hide the *whole* truth from yourself.

Within a two-power or dualistic thought system, “good” means a conditional and limited good—a good that is co-defined with bad, a “good” that is merely “not bad.” That is *not* the same good as the unconditional and non-relative good inherent

in the principle of one power, a good beyond which there is nothing. If there really were only one power, then your belief in the reality of a limited relative “good” would effectively block you from experiencing the unconditional and non-relative good, would effectively block your awareness of the presence of perfect love.

Ultimately, whether or not there is some “what really is” apart from your beliefs and experiences—and that may be an unanswerable question—your beliefs limit and define your experience. The “cost” of the belief in one power would be relinquishing your feelings of fear and guilt. The “cost” of your belief in two-powers would be the very possibility of experiencing perfect happiness. Your real question here is how do *your* beliefs limit and define *your* experience?

An Either-Or Choice

You have to choose to believe either in one power, OR in more than one power. These two choices are mutually exclusive. Moreover, you will always be making one of these choices, and your choice will be expressed in how you think about your current situation, how you experience it, and how you respond to it.

It may seem that it is always better to choose a both-and alternative over an either-or one. We strive to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

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But you cannot believe in *only one* power and at the same time in more than one power. When you perceive anything that is seemingly bad, you have to choose whether to believe that it is really bad (i.e., an expression of some real power for badness), OR to believe that it is merely your temporary inability to see the truth of its underlying goodness. You have to choose whether to think that the belief in only one power is merely naive, OR is the most truthful and revealing belief choice possible. You cannot choose both.

This is not a belief choice that you make one time, once and for all. You are implicitly making it in every moment of your life. You may choose to believe in one power in one moment or one situation or one relationship, and then choose to believe in two powers in the next. You will know which choice you are making by how you feel.

Any feeling of unease—including anger, sadness, fear, guilt, hatred, or unhappiness—is always a reflection of an underlying belief in two powers. This belief in two powers may be expressed in many different ways: you versus another, you versus a body which seems to be sick or injured, you versus germs or viruses or pollution, you versus economic or political forces that seem to threaten you, you versus the world, or even you versus God. Or you may think of this conflict as some cosmic battle of good and evil, or of God and Satan.

When you choose to believe in two powers, you will imagine that you feel unease *because* of some real battle, whether

you think of it as a battle between you and something else, or as a battle between some larger power for good and some larger power for bad. But the real cause of your experience of unpeace in any situation is ultimately your own belief in two powers.

*What you feel is always a reflection of what thoughts you are thinking, what thoughts you are **choosing** to think.*

If you are committed to believe that there is only one power, and that power is the infinite eternal creative potential for goodness and love, then you know there can never be any real reason to feel upset in any way. Even when you seem to experience evil or lack or suffering in yourself or others, you will choose to interpret it as only a temporary distortion of your perception. You will choose to respond with compassion and love, without fear or anger or hatred or despair. *Peace is the reflection of the belief in one power.*

Practicing the Principle of One Power

1 When you experience something in your life that seems un-source-like—for instance, wrong, bad, tragic, unfair, threatening, fearful, or painful—choose to look at it as the temporary hiddenness of source in your awareness. Ask a deeper part of your mind to allow you to see it with the eyes of love.

2 In every moment, try to focus your attention on the underlying truth of the infinite eternal creative potential for well-being. Think of what you are actually experiencing as but the temporary form of the underlying thrust or impulse toward ever-expanding goodness. Think of it as the temporary form of source-potential as it appears to you in your own awareness, as defined and perhaps even distorted by your own thoughts and beliefs.

3 Affirm for yourself, “I am now a be-ing of the one infinite, eternal, creative power of love. My being is the very lov-ing of love itself, the on-going creative extending-forth of peace and joy and well-being.”