

A.C.I.M. LESSON 24

I do not perceive my own best interests.

In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. Therefore, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result. What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong. It is inevitable, then, that you will not serve your own best interests. Yet they are your only goal in any situation which is correctly perceived. Otherwise, you will not recognize what they are.

If you realized that you do not perceive your own best interests, you could be taught what they are. But in the presence of your conviction that you do know what they are, you cannot learn. The idea for today is a step toward opening your mind so that learning can begin.

The exercises for today require much more honesty than you are accustomed to using. A few subjects, honestly and carefully considered in each of the three practice periods (once in the morning, once in the early afternoon, and once at night) which should be undertaken today, will be more helpful than a more cursory examination of a large number. Two minutes are suggested for each of the mind-searching periods which the exercises involve.

The practice periods should begin with repeating today's idea ("I do not perceive my own best interests"), followed by searching the mind, with closed eyes, for unresolved situations about which you are currently concerned. The emphasis should be on uncovering the outcome you want (this is not about coming up with ideals of what you want, this is about the following - what does your actions and thoughts around these situations tell you about what you want here). You will quickly realize that you have a number of goals in mind as part of the desired outcome, and also that these goals are on different levels and often conflict.

In applying the idea for today, name each situation that occurs to you, and then enumerate carefully as many goals as possible that you would like to be met in its resolution (again, what does your actions and thoughts around these situations tell you about what you want). The form of each application should be roughly as follows: In the situation involving ____, I would like ____ to happen, and ____ to happen, and so on. Try to cover as many different kinds of outcomes as may honestly occur to you, even if some of them do not appear to be directly related to the situation, or even to be inherent in it at all.

If these exercises are done properly, you will quickly recognize that you are making a large number of demands of the situation which have nothing to do with it. You will also recognize that many of your goals are contradictory, that you have no unified outcome in mind, and that you must experience disappointment in connection with some of your goals, however the situation turns out.

After covering the list of as many hoped-for goals as possible, for each unresolved situation that crosses your mind say to yourself:

"I do not perceive my own best interests in this situation", and go on to the next one.