

The Never Mind Game:

Alternative solutions for life's suffering:

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--This will become a pamphlet for 2015--

To let go of suffering you need to understand what suffering actually is, what causes it, and how to escape it.

I want to introduce you to something that the Thai Monastics brought forth from the Ancient texts. It is the saying of NEVERMIND. I would like to introduce to this same idea in a game called the NEVERMIND GAME.

Mind Training.

Over the past 14 years, I discovered that most people who come to learn meditation, want to reclaim control of their life. They are asking for a way to CHANGE. The secret of achieving control turns out to be something quite different than you'd expect to hear. You see, *“in order to get control, you first have to let go of all control, so that, you can then see how things actually work!”* That is how the change happens through using Buddhist Meditation. The secret is that you must learn what suffering is, how it works, and then practice how to escape from it and replace it with something much nicer.

Purifying and retraining Mind is the way to do this. This doesn't have to be boring. It can be fun. There is a simple practice that can help lead you to end old habits and create new healthier habits that will help you see and understand how things in life actually work. Some say this sort of thing is about forcefully controlling your mind. It doesn't have to work that way. If you personally struggle a lot to control something, then you are still caught in suffering, right? You can choose a gentler approach.

The kind of control I am talking about here is discovering how the suffering comes up and how to let go of that suffering, say NEVERMIND and then you keep going in life. It's about learning how mind operates. If you think you can suppress what is naturally happening in your mind, you will have a very unsatisfactory experience. This can be very difficult to try to do and it will cause you more suffering because of the tension and tightness involved in it. Is there another way? There might be.

It is possible to train your mind to lean naturally into a more wholesome direction. When fully retrained a person will *lovingly accept things in the present time just as they are and respond to life as needed.* A purified mind understands the true nature of everything because it has gained knowledge about how Mind actually works. This is how you can greatly reduce suffering. An untrained mind lives in the dark and very often remains confused.

Knowledge and Vision means knowing by seeing and this is how meditation can set mind free. During meditation you are placing mind in a position where you can then observe how it is working. Mind upgrades this new knowledge into Wisdom as you begin to 'SEE how things work'.

By observing how mind's attention draws you into suffering, how anger, hatred, frustration, or depression feels like it grabs onto you, and, noticing how the tension in your body changes when this happens, you

can begin to realize there is a way out of this if you can learn to detect the earliest symptom as this starts happening. If you can see it, then you can let it go, and replace it with something else; something positive and helpful.

It is our personal craving that bursts out with a powerful energy pushing the wheel of suffering forward. Craving always manifests (shows up first) as tension and tightness in mind and body. It is that first personal opinion, that “I” like it, or the “I” don’t like it mind, that leads you into attachment or aversion concerning whatever you are thinking about Attachment or Aversion are both full of tension and tightness. Your suffering flows forward and compounds itself from this first personal opinion point.

Freeing the Mind

The Liberation of Mind can be achieved by ‘shifting your perspective’. This leads the way. This means a person can change the way they look at things in life. We personally choose how we see the world around us. We do this almost unconsciously. Even though it feels like this is unconscious, you need to remember that, your outlook, your attitude, your will, and your conduct in life are by your choice alone. You alone are responsible.

If you change your outlook on what is happening around you, then, it follows that everything in your experience changes too. This has to do with your perspective. The change that happens in your behavior when you change your perspective becomes obvious to the people around you. We affect the world around us. We may not think so, but, we do. This change happens through a gradual teaching, a gradual practice, and a gradual learning about how to bring up a different perspective leading to different results. The change takes place through the progressive unfolding of knowledge and wisdom about how human beings actually experience their life in this existence. But, you should only believe this when you personally begin to see this in your meditation. In this case, literally, the truth will set you free!

How to practice

First, you should begin by practicing a new form of skilled observation. We call this TWIM. This stands for Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation. This practice is gently yoking together again the practice of Serenity and Insight meditation. The entire time you are practicing this meditation, you need to keep on gently smiling; raising the corners of your mouth upwards. This will help you to uplift and open your mind. Keep your curiosity up. Stay interested in seeing how mind’s attention works. Be persistent and keep going until mind really gets this information internally.

Meditation means observing the movements of mind’s attention as it moves from one thing to another so that you can see how the suffering works.

Mindfulness means remembering to keep this observation going all the time and to remember what to do whenever a thought tries to pull your attention away from what you are doing while meditating OR from any task you are doing in life.

Insight – An insight is when you realize how something actually works that you did not know about before. You become enlightened about whatever it is you discover!

Most valuable players in this game are named Curiosity, Energy, Patience, and Persistence . Their teamwork together pays off in your meditation practice and, helps to free the mind.

Curiosity keeps your interest up during your meditation.

Energy supports your curiosity

Patience calms mind and opens the way to uncover the answer you seek.

Persistence infers the repetition of the practice cycle many, many times, until mind learns and trusts to automatically run the practice cycle without you ordering anything to happen.

Initially, this team will get you started in the right direction. The practice leads you to stop reacting so much in life and begin to more calmly respond instead. The initial End Goal in this game is to understand how this little management system allows you to bring about a wholesome change in your life.

The opening of mind through knowledge and wisdom happens through your own personal practice. Knowledge is the foundation information and wisdom means when you have this knowledge, you then also know what to do with it. As you learn to see more closely how things are happening, you begin to realize how impersonal this whole experience actually is. Everything is operating in conjunction with your body as you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch things in life. Even our thoughts arise without us asking them to. BUT we steer the boat, so to speak! The decision what to DO next is our responsibility alone.

How well you can develop your mindfulness depends on how well you can empty out the old rubbish; the old ideas. Let them go. Experiment with this practice purely. Can you let old habits go? Then, can you begin to play this NEVRMIND game. This will change how you look at things happening in life. Life will get easier for you. The game becomes most productive when you begin to let things go and stop taking things so personally. This is how you create a more open mind, a mind that is more relaxed, a mind that is more willing to listen.

There is a little sutta that talks about some of this on a very old text.

This comes out of a book called the Anguttara Nikaya (A.I.4)

And, this was said by the Buddha when he was speaking to his monks:

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely harmful as the untamed mind. Indeed, an untamed mind conduces to great harm.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the tamed mind. Indeed, a tamed mind conduces to great benefit.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely harmful as the unguarded mind. Indeed, an unguarded mind conduces to great harm.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the guarded mind. Indeed, a guarded mind conduces to great benefit.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely harmful as the unprotected mind. Indeed, an unprotected mind conduces to great harm.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely beneficial as a protected mind. Indeed, a protected mind conduces to great benefit.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely harmful as the uncontrolled mind. Indeed, an uncontrolled mind conduces to great harm.”

“I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the controlled mind. Indeed, a controlled mind conduces to great benefit.”

“ I do not see anything so completely harmful as the untamed, unguarded, unprotected, uncontrolled mind. Indeed, an untamed, unguarded, unprotected, uncontrolled mind conduces to great harm.”

“ I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the tamed, guarded, protected, and controlled mind. Indeed, a tamed, guarded, protected, and controlled mind conduces to great benefit.”

After you read this, you might think, well, gee, that’s nice! But wouldn’t it mean more to me if I knew what untamed and tamed; unguarded and guarded; unprotected and protected; and uncontrolled and controlled meant? I have created 4 notes below to help you understand these more precisely. .

Note 1- Untamed and tamed mind.

“I do not see anything so completely harmful as the untamed mind. Indeed, an untamed mind conduces to great harm.”

“I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the tamed mind. Indeed, a tamed mind conduces to great benefit.”

When you look at yourself and people around you, you might notice how people’s minds jump around subject to subject, thought to thought; thinking about this, thinking about that. Our minds get very overcrowded sometimes. It seems like this proliferation of thoughts refuses to stop. The older Monks called this ‘monkey mind’. It’s like a monkey jumping around in a tree. That is what an un-tamed mind looks like. It jumps all over the place and it cannot concentrate on one task. It has trouble resting. Mind cannot take a statement in without automatically comparing it to 10 other past life experiences and it repeatedly gets pulled away. Life’s progress slows down, and your productivity drops away too. Information cannot come in to be clearly understood by the mind and passed on clearly.

A tamed mind is more still. It is confident because it has the knowledge of how things work. It is uncrowded and clear about the present. It can do one task at a time. It is like a pool, clear and open, more balanced, ready to receive new content and to decide how to respond. It has no fear anymore because it understands how things work. The pressure of uncertainty is gone.

The first thing you can do in the NEVERMIND game is to just experience the difference between a monkey mind and a still mind.

Note 2- Unguarded and guarded mind.

“ I do not see anything so completely harmful as the unguarded mind. Indeed, an unguarded mind conduces to great harm.”

“ I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the guarded mind. Indeed, an untamed mind conduces to great harm.”

If you don't know how things work, we tend to mimic how everyone around us is living. That is how we grow up. You are doing the best you can do but actually this often leads to reacting to whatever is going on in life. You have no understanding of how morality, ethics, and some natural laws affect how you live. You very likely have never heard of the five precepts which are simply put, five pieces of advice about how to live a balanced and happy life. These pieces of advice were given to us to remind us to stay on track. So, you may find yourself drifting around to and fro and re-acting to whatever you come in contact with in life and sometimes, you don't even know why you're-act the way you do.

When a pleasant feeling arises through a sense door, you embrace it and think about it. Liking or disliking it, desire or aversion, comes up in your mind. It becomes difficult to stay on track in daily life if you keep on thinking about it. You don't know about guarding mind. No one taught you about how a distracting thought can pull you away and how these distractions are related to the precepts. This causes you confusion. Without that balanced knowledge, you will struggle to keep pleasant feelings going, and you might try to stop painful feeling from arising. This pushing and pulling takes a lot of energy away from you, you get very tired, and this results in suffering.

But, with the framework of the five precepts you become equipped to guard mind. You learn how things work and know how and when to let go of the cause of suffering. You learn how to play the NEVERMIND game. When something grabs you, you immediately think NEVERMIND! Then you might smile and lighten up in your mind. You learn how to let go of tension and tightness in your mind and body. You feel lighter and happier. You begin to become comfortable doing one task at a time and you will be more likely to allow the universe to unfold without any exhaustion from trying to make things happen the way you want them to. You begin to experience contentment.

This is the beginning of change. You find yourself accepting things as they are more often instead of fighting with the truth and continuing to re-act to stimuli. Soon, you begin to *respond* as needed more often in life.

There is an inter-relationship between the precepts and distractions that needs to be understood. These distractions are teachers telling you where your craving lies. Craving is that bossy opinionated little mind that jumps up and causes all that inner tension you feel while interactions are happening. Eventually, you will let go of the distractions without placing any attention on them. IN essence you will begin to just NEVERMIND. Then, you can live more easily.

At this time, you are beginning to accept things as they are and to give up the struggle to change the things you cannot change. Now, you are guarding mind. You know what to do. Through understanding how things work, mind begins to calm down. It feels safer.

Precepts & Distractions have a give-and-take relationship.

Advice for Life

5 Precepts are as follows and they really are simple:

1. Don't Kill or harm other living beings on purpose;
2. Don't take what is not given;
3. Don't commit wrong sexual Activity that causes mental or physical pain to yourself or others;
4. Don't tell lies, use harsh speech, speak gossip, slander others, or promote nonsense talk;
5. Don't use social/recreational drugs or alcohol that can cloud mind and lead to breaking other precepts.

If you keep these precepts going all the time, life will run very smoothly. But if you break one of the precepts, you can plan on something coming back at you in return that will involve one or a few of the distractions. This makes life tougher. This can come back on you very quickly or it can happen at some later time in this life. The key here is to always remember

“What you do in this present, dictates what happens in the future.”

This is about any event where something comes back at you from something you did in some earlier time. I don't know anyone over 30 years old who has not experienced this for themselves as a result of something they did when they were younger.

It is also true that

“What you think and ponder on, that becomes the inclination of your mind.”

If you get up in the morning frowning, and that is what is on your mind, and you feed this, you have set up your day for what some would call a down day. But if you get up with a smile and keep that going in the morning, then your day can be supported a great deal by the energy in that smile. So keep smiling.

The Distractions

1. Greed, Lust, “I” want it mind, Attachment with tension
2. Hatred, Ill-will, “I” don't want it mind, Aversion with tension
3. Sleepiness and Dullness
4. Restlessness, Guilt, Remorse, Anxiety
5. Doubt in the way you are doing the practice; doubt about life!

The advice concerning these precepts and distractions is simple. If you break a precept, you should quickly and quietly just say them again to yourself and try not to break another one. This will help retrain your mind and keep it going in a good direction. Now, usually, you don't wallow in the sadness of breaking one, but, instead you get up and you keep going in life on track again in a positive way. When

you are in a retreat setting, you may ask a guiding teacher to give you the precepts again so that nothing gets in the way of your meditation there. But you don't have to have anyone else routinely do this for you. You say them yourself. During everyday life, it is good for you to just make a habit of going over them in your mind each morning to set your mind up for that particular day and keep smiling.

Note 3- Unprotected or protected mind

“I do not see anything so completely harmful as the unprotected mind. Indeed, an unprotected mind conduces to great harm.”

“I do not see anything so completely beneficial as a protected mind. Indeed, an protected mind conduces to great benefit.”

The unprotected untrained mind can easily get lost in emotions, grief, frustration, or depression. It can feel trapped by sadness, anger, anxiety and more. It can feel like the entire world is pressing down on you and that everything is happening to you. You feel this way because you are not protected by having true information about how things work.

But this is not the truth. Everything is not happening to us. Actually, everything is happening from us. It is all a matter of our perspective, isn't it? In this way, we create our own experience.

RIGHT EFFORT is what can make the difference for us here. If we do not keep RIGHT EFFORT going, keep our practice going, then, we can fall down. If we let things slide, we can fall back into our old habits. In this way, we are unprotected. But, don't be hard on yourself if this happens because it simply means that you were never taught the knowledge you needed to prevent this. Just get up again, re-balance yourself, and keep going. Things always are changing and this can change too.

By developing wisdom through practicing RIGHT EFFORT, following truth, which is the Dhamma, mind becomes protected. The more often we keep our practice going, the more often we see and release unwholesome thoughts and feelings and shift mind into more wholesome mind-states. As we practice, we begin leaning towards the wholesome, and then, all disturbances will be left behind. Without mind's attention on these arising distractions, without feeding them, they will starve and have no strength to come up again. They will fade away and mind will become very clear.

You develop your practice by making a commitment to keep the steps of RIGHT EFFORT going until mind shifts into an automatic tendency to operate on its own. At that point we realize that we have let go of our old habits. Now we KNOW we are changing. <grin>

To practice constructively like this, you begin when you

RECOGNIZE whenever tension begins to arise and there is a tightness happening in mind so that it begins to move away from whatever you are doing. When you watch for this, you are developing a new kind of skilled observation and then you;

RELEASE whatever thought came up and **RELAX** any remaining subtle tension in your head.

You then **RE-SMILE** to lighten up mind and sharpen awareness as you **RETURN** to whatever you were doing.

As you practice like this whenever pulled away, you keep on smiling and the idea is to begin to put **loving kindness** into all the tasks you do during the day. This cancels out any resentment you may have for the work you are doing.

Once you get this going, you will remember more often to **REPEAT** this practice whenever it is needed.

This practice becomes your new management system for life. The idea of **NEVERMIND** and using these 6Rs will help you **CHANGE** in a very good happier direction.

This is an improvement each time you let go of what pulls you away and you stop reacting to things. You replace reactions with a smile and internally, you and I know that you are playing the **NEVERMIND** game while you are letting go and relaxing each time.

Whenever you are doing any task, at any time, if something catches hold of your mind, doesn't matter what it is, you can smile and giggle a little inside as you recognize you are not on your task anymore. It happened impersonally that you were pulled away, so you just **NEVERMIND**. Then you release your attention off it, relax, smile, and come back to what you were doing and keep smiling when you do this.

Keep playing this just like a game. Keep it light and have fun with it. Make it a daily life game and incorporate it into everything you are doing in life. Keep it going all day long! This practice will shift mind as it goes along so you begin to take a more impersonal perspective. Then LIFE doesn't have to be taken so seriously. Most of life is happening as an impersonal process of living and then.

If we learn to understand what is going on life can still be fun. Imagine that! If you keep the "**Nevermind Game**" going, then mind will gradually adopt the habit of letting things go more easily. Mind will shift to operating more lightly and smoothly. You won't get so stressed out anymore when you try to think about a solution for what is happening. No matter what comes up in life, if it starts to grab at your, then, "**Nevermind!**"

Just say to yourself that, "**I am going to forgive the interruption, and see only what is real. I will deal with what is essentially there, and not imagine or add anything else to it that is un-essential. I am going to keep smiling and get through this by responding with whatever is needed and continuing to relax and smile!**" That's it!

A painful feeling can arise sometimes and that is just that. It is a painful feeling. It is not you. It is just a feeling. FEAR does not arise first. Fear is a concept that we personally create after a painful feeling comes up. When we take a painful feeling personally, and we expand the concept of fear by thinking about it, then it will grow bigger and it will turn into real trouble.

To let go of fear, first, see the painful feeling. Understand that there is a cause for it arising, and then, let the feeling be right there and **RELAX** without attention on it, smile, and come back to what is going on!

Don't try to force anything to happen. Just let the feeling be there and remember that a feeling is only 'a feeling'. It's not personal. It is not YOU. It is just a feeling that was not there, has now arisen, and will

pass away. See it for what it really is. Don't fight it. Just allow it to be there until it fades away without your attention on it. This Knowledge begins to set us free. It really helps us.

A protected mind knows and sees clearly how things actually work.

Having proper knowledge helps to protect us. Experiencing the relief of suffering is priceless.

Now, keep this practice going **ALL THE TIME**.

Begin to observe the movements of mind's attention during your day. It is on what you are doing, or, is it wandering around somewhere else?

Watch more closely at what is really going on. This is really interesting to observe how this works..

Note 4- Uncontrolled and controlled mind

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely harmful as the uncontrolled mind. Indeed, an uncontrolled mind conduces to great harm.”

“Monks, I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the controlled mind. Indeed, a controlled mind conduces to great benefit.”

An uncontrolled mind does not have the knowledge of this practice that we just discussed. It seems that this kind of Knowledge got lost. Without this knowledge, mind jumps here and there, into memories of the past and into worries about the future. It gets involved with the habitual attachment or aversion of whatever comes up. Mind struggles with the tension and tightness involved because of our personal attachment or aversion to the thoughts that come up. So keep your observation practice impersonal.

The controlled mind is different. While you are practicing right effort and maintaining a more impersonal perspective, you are able to let go, relax, smile, and come back to life more easily. Eventually this kind of right effort begins to operate automatically and you do not take things so personally and out of proportion anymore.

You begin to feel lighter. The six steps of this practice are actually completing the Four steps of **RIGHT EFFORT** or **RIGHT STRIVING** found in the Pali Canon Buddhist texts.

Everything that the Buddha was investigating was about how mind works; how we become deceived by the suffering, and how to find an escape from it. This was his investigation and quest.

As the steps of this little practice begin to happen on their own, Mind becomes more familiar with detecting the arising unwholesome states sooner. This is possible because as tension lowers inside of us, we can then detect tension that is stronger as it arises.

As this begins to work, you begin to take a lighter look at life and smile more often. Everything gets more comfortable.

Once you notice the symptom tension in a negative arising thought, and you understand the danger of it, then you are learning how to escape from some of your suffering. And how do you escape it? You remember to NEVERMIND, and to run the 6Rs of Right Effort.

As you release your attention on what comes up and you relax, and bring up a wholesome feeling by smiling as you return to whatever you were doing, you can then keep that smile going more easily than before.

Each time you do this, you are creating a new habit! Mind is changing. It is adopting a NEVERMIND more impersonal perspective. It is letting go of the tension and tightness that causes so much suffering.

Now, you will no longer get so tired by the end of your day, and there will be more energy for you to live life fully!

In conclusion:

“... I do not see anything so completely harmful as the untamed, unguarded, unprotected, uncontrolled mind. Indeed, an untamed, unguarded, unprotected, uncontrolled mind conduces to great harm.”

“... I do not see anything so completely beneficial as the tamed, guarded, protected, and controlled mind. Indeed, a tamed, guarded, protected, and controlled mind conduces to great benefit.”

Because of this practice, you'll rest more easily. If someone were to yell at you now, it is more likely that you would see and understand that person more clearly. You might identify that they are having a bad day and a painful feeling is coming up. They are taking it personally, and not liking it and so, in truth, they are reacting to that feeling and NOT to you. So, perhaps, now you can forgive them more easily and just NEVERMIND.

It is because of this understanding and by thinking this is personal that maybe you can let it go. There is room now for you to have compassion and not to reflect back anger to the other person. This is a step towards peace, isn't it?

We know now that things can change. As you let go of re-actions, and respond instead with forgiveness, compassion, and loving kindness, they then fill in the space that was left by the absence of the old reactions.

IN truth, without seeing and understanding how this works, no change can take place. There simply isn't any space in your mind for change to happen if you are taking things so personally and they become so serious for you that you react. But now, with a calmer mind, you respond! This is a significant CHANGE.

With a cooler, calmer mind, now, perhaps you can ask that other person if they want to go and get some tea or get some fruit or ice cream, and maybe just talk a little bit about what's really bothering them. Perhaps, when you get right down to it, they only need a smile, some patience, and a listening ear. You never know, eh?

In summary, this “**NEVERMIND GAME**” is a personal management system you can play to use to create some space in your mind so you can think more clearly and choose some peaceful solutions for things that used to really bother you before. By playing this game all the time, by using this practice called TWIM, it will help you form a new habit of smiling and you will develop more patience to replace old reactions that used to cause you sadness and suffering. In a short time, this practice can help to achieve a lighter, calmer, more balanced mind and give you a better perspective for life. It helps you gain more energy to enjoy life and your smiles come up more easily and more often so that you can share them with other friends and family around you.

If you like, you can develop your own 3X5 scorecard for this personal NEVER MIND game. You can keep it in your pocket and look at it at the end of your day and see how you well you can do with this for one week.

On the card you can make 6 columns and put a check mark or an “X” each time you remember to do what it says in that column.

A column is- **I noticed I was caught in lots of mental proliferation, so I said NEVERMIND + 6R.**

B column is- **I was just beginning to name it and think about it, so I said NEVERMIND + 6R.**

C column is- **I barely just felt something pulling me away, so I said NEVERMIND + 6R.**

D column is- **Mind did the 6R and I just said NEVERMIND, smiled, and went back to my task?**

E column is- **How many times did I keep smiling and NEVERMIND when things weren't perfect?**

F column- **How many times today did I give a smile to someone who needed it around me today?**

This is fun. How often did you laugh when you got caught? That's a good score column too.

In the evening, take a look at this card and see how you did for the day. Even if you remember to do this only one time in a day of for a few minutes, you will progress if you keep playing with this. It works.

Fact is, Life is short. It can be sweet or it was be tough and bitter. It has been said that smiles can be contagious! They are sweet. So, what do you say? Let's start an epidemic! Let's decide to smile.

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