

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

Is it possible to put a thought out of the mind? If so, how is this done; how can one prevent its recurrence and keep it out of the mind?

It is possible to keep a thought out of the mind, but it is not possible to put a thought out of the mind as we would put a tramp out of the house. The reason why so many are not able to keep away undesirable thoughts, and are not able to think on definite lines, is because they believe in the prevalent notion that they must put thoughts out of their minds. It is impossible to put a thought out of one's mind because in putting it out attention must be given the thought, and while the mind gives the thought attention it is impossible to get rid of that thought. The one who says: Go away you bad thought, or, I will not think of this or that, keeps that thing in his mind as securely as though it were riveted there. If one says to himself that he must not think of this or that thing, he will be like the ascetics and hermits and fanatics who make a list of things they are not to think about and then proceed to go over this list mentally and to put those thoughts out of their mind and fail. The old story of "The Great Green Bear" illustrates this very well. A mediaeval alchemist was pestered by one of his pupils who wanted to be told how to transmute lead into gold. His master told the pupil that he could not do it, even though he were told, because he was not qualified. On the continued pleading of the pupil, the alchemist decided to teach the pupil a lesson and told him that as he was going on a journey the following day he would leave him the formula by which he might succeed if he were able to follow all instructions, but that it would be necessary to pay the closest attention to the formula and to be accurate in every detail. The pupil was delighted and eagerly began the work at the time appointed. He followed the instructions carefully and was accurate in the preparation of his materials and instruments. He saw that metals of the right quality and quantity were in their proper crucibles, and the temperature required was produced. He was careful that the vapors were all conserved and passed through the alembics and retorts, and found that the deposits from these were exactly as stated in the formula. All this

caused him much satisfaction and as he went on with the experiment he gained confidence in its ultimate success. One of the rules was that he should not read through the formula but should follow it only as he proceeded with his work. As he proceeded, he came to the statement: Now that the experiment has proceeded thus far and that the metal is at white heat, take a little of the red powder between the forefinger and thumb of the right hand, a little of the white powder between the forefinger and thumb of the left hand, stand over the glowing mass which you now have before you and be ready to drop these powders after you have obeyed the next order. The young man did as ordered and read on: You have now reached the crucial test, and success will follow only if you are able to obey the following: Do not think of the great green bear and be sure that you do not think of the great green bear. The young man paused breathless. "The great green bear. I am not to think of the great green bear," said he. "The great green bear! What is the great green bear? No, I will not think about the great green bear, but, confound it, I *am*, thinking about the great green bear." As he continued to think that he should not think about the great green bear he could think about nothing else, until finally it occurred to him that he should go on with his experiment and although the thought of a great green bear was still in his mind he turned to the formula to see what the next order was and he read: You have failed in the trial. You have failed at the crucial moment because you have allowed your attention to be taken from the work to think about a great green bear. The heat in the furnace has not been kept up, the proper amount of vapor has failed to pass through this and that retort, and it is useless now to drop the red and white powders.

A thought remains in the mind as long as attention is given to it. When the mind ceases to give attention to one thought and places it on another thought, the thought which has attention remains in the mind, and that which has no attention gets out. The way to get rid of a thought is to hold the mind definitely and persistently on one definite and particular subject or thought. It will be found that if this is done, no thoughts which do not relate to the subject can intrude themselves upon the mind. While the mind desires a thing its thought will revolve around that thing of desire because the desire is like a center of gravity and attracts the mind. The mind can free itself from that desire, if it wills. The process by which it is freed is that it sees and understands that the desire is not the best for it and then decides on something that is better. After the mind decides on the

best subject, it should direct its thought to that subject and attention should be given to that subject only. By this process, the center of gravity is changed from the old desire to the new subject of thought. Mind decides where its center of gravity will be. To whatever subject or object the mind goes there will its thought be. So the mind continues to change its subject of thought, its center of gravity, until it learns to place the center of gravity in itself. When this is done, the mind withdraws into itself its ramifications and functions, through the avenues of sense and the sense organs. The mind, not functioning through its senses into the physical world, and learning to turn its energies into itself, finally awakens to its own reality as distinct from its fleshly and other bodies. By so doing, the mind not only discovers its real self but it may discover the real self of all others and the real world which penetrates and upholds all others.

Such realization may not be attained at once, but it will be realized as the final result of the keeping undesirable thoughts out of the mind by attending to and thinking of others which are desirable. No one is at once able to think only of the thought which he wishes to think of and thus to exclude or prevent other thoughts from entering the mind; but he will be able to do so if he tries and keeps on trying.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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