



How are You?

One of the more interesting aspects to my life over the past few decades has been the slowly growing understanding of just how much control I have over myself. I don't mean anything to do with such things as what I choose to eat for dinner, or straightforward things like that. It's more about that amorphous thing - 'how do I feel'.

At a younger stage of life, I would never have considered such a thing to be self-directed. If somebody asked me that sort of question, I would reply with such phrases as, "I feel great today," or "Man, I'm really tired," and I would absolutely have believed that the 'great' or the 'tired' was being caused by external events, and not something that I was choosing.

But over the years, I became familiar with a certain type of person who - no matter what the circumstances - always seemed to reply to such inquiries with some kind of answer on the negative side; they were tired, sick, busy, unhappy, etc. etc., and I began to suspect that this was the way they were 'choosing' to feel, or 'choosing' to present themselves, whether consciously, or more likely, unconsciously.

The reason I bring this up, is that in recent years I have sometimes found myself doing the same thing. When the staff arrives for work in the morning, I have sometimes presented a 'tired face', and they have responded as expected, commiserating me on the travails of having to work so hard.

I think I can understand the underlying psychology at work here - such behaviour is clearly ego - 'look how wonderful I am, battling all the problems and working so hard!' But this is crazy! If one wears the 'I'm so pressed upon' hat often enough, it becomes something that one can't take off. Too much of this, and you *become* that type of person, the one who is always tired, sick, busy, unhappy, etc., and the next thing you know, you really are those things.

I am not 100% certain that I will be able to shake off this behaviour completely. Some aspects to our character are set in stone in our DNA, or very strongly influenced by our upbringing, and are not so amenable to conscious control. If this falls into that category then I suppose there will not be much I can do about it. But if not, then it's going to be up to me; I have to be on the lookout for this, and make sure I nip any such episodes in the bud from now on.

Now, having said all that, I would be less than candid if I failed to mention something else. I am writing this little story on the train. I am on an early morning rush hour express, and it is *jammed*; I was able to get a seat only because the train began its journey at my local station. The purpose of this trip downtown is to deliver some woodblocks, a sample print, and a batch of printing paper to Numabe-san, the printer I have hired to run this batch.

I booked him for this job a while back, with the two of us trying to adjust our schedules to match, and it has been a very close call getting everything ready for him. The last week or so has been a blur of activity, madly trying to get this print finished while at the same time directing the activities of the staff and the men busy with our workroom construction. I didn't actually make it to bed last night, and just 'crashed' for a couple of hours next to the workbench.

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How do I feel? "I am so "

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