

EXPERIMENT WITH “IT’S ALL OK!”

We have a ticket to paradise. We hold that ticket right now, and we can use it any time. Whenever we use that ticket, we get a free replacement—one we can redeem anywhere.

This ticket is not a real ticket, one we actually hold in our hands. Instead, it’s one we hold in our heads. This ticket to paradise is an attitude, a way of thinking, a style of seeing the world. This attitude means “loving it all” and permitting things to be the way they are—right now, in all their glorious imperfection and messiness.

“Move toward love” could be the most powerful, unusual, and indefensible Success Strategy in this book. It’s also a Success Strategy with notable advocates throughout history. For example, Jesus suggested that we love our enemies as ourselves. And Gandhi said he wanted the British to leave India not as enemies but as friends.

When we practice moving toward love, we’re willing to face our imperfections and those of others. We freely admit our weaknesses (as well as our strengths). We allow, permit, and even embrace our problems as chances to create new solutions and gain new skills.

Moving toward love does not mean that we let other people take advantage of us, or that we meekly put up with aggression. Instead, we let go of our *internal* resistance to our problems. *Love* in this context means fullknowledge and full acceptance—seeing all the details about a problem and permitting it to be the way it is right now. While adopting this internal attitude, we can take whatever actions might be appropriate to change external circumstances.

When we move toward love, we acknowledge that life isn’t perfect. And we accept all thoughts and feelings about that fact. Then we can discover solutions and take decisive action that’s not tainted with hatred.

After using this Success Strategy for a while, we might be able to survey our whole lives and say “It’s all OK.” We could see our circumstances and behaviors as perfect in the present moment—and that perfection includes the potential to change our circumstances and behaviors. Enjoying the perfection of the present means that we can celebrate the goals we’ve already met and look forward to accomplishing new goals. We can relish wanting as much as achieving.



Choose your place on the spectrum

You might not be able to love what's happening to you right now. Perhaps your current circumstances are confusing, disappointing, or even painful.

No problem. If you can't love it all, then just love as much as you can. See if you can just move *toward* love. And if you can't move toward love and acceptance, then see if you can at least move *away* from antagonism and resentment. While you do that, love yourself for not loving it all. If you find it hard to even *imagine* moving toward love, then just start from wherever you are and love as much as you can.

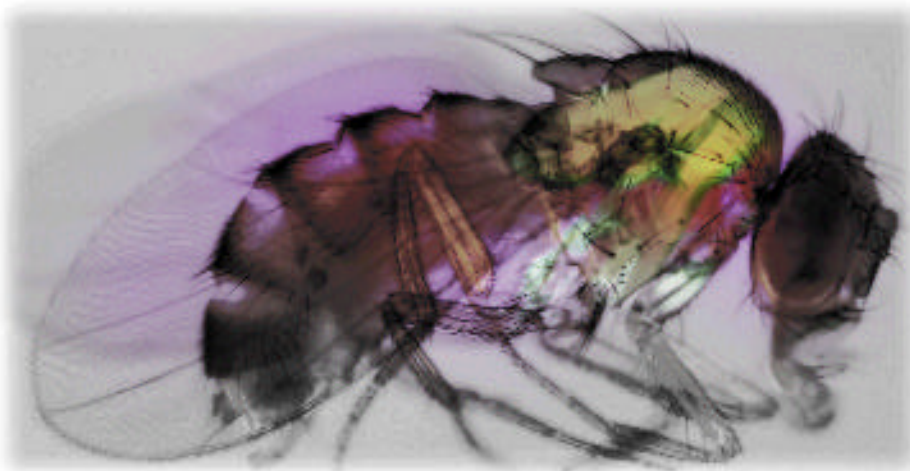
Think of this Success Strategy as a spectrum. If you can't move toward love 100 percent of the time, then practice it 50 percent of the time—or 25 percent, or 10 percent. Any movement you make toward full love can take your happiness to a whole new level.

Welcome chances to practice

When moving toward love becomes a habit, we find that we can freely observe things that once repulsed us.

For many years I've practiced moving toward love by seeking out things I routinely avoided. At one point I asked myself *What is the most repulsive sight I can imagine?* My answer was maggots. I figured that if I could love the sight of maggots, then I could love just about anything. So sometimes I would drive around until I saw road kill on the highway. Then I'd park the car, flip the road kill over, and say, "Aha! Maggots. Opportunity to practice!"

After doing this, I found it a lot easier to love the people and events in my life that were far less disgusting than maggots—everything from a flat tire to a passing driver who gave me the "finger." I could say, "Flat tire? Wow, I haven't changed a flat tire in years. It's time for me to brush up on this skill." And instead of taking that driver's gesture as a personal insult, I could take it as useful feedback about my driving.



Move from what should be to what is—and what's next

In moments of disappointment, when events don't turn out the way we expect, we might judge life to be awful. We feel the acute contradiction between the way things *are* and the way we think they *should* be.

“Move toward love” represents an alternative—noticing what *is* instead of what *should* be. And it's a path we can start on today—not next week, not tomorrow, but right now, before the next 60 seconds are up. And every step on the path involves the same strategy. We simply accept whatever is happening in the present moment—period. Then we can take appropriate action.

When we are willing to love our problems, we drain them of much of their energy. In addition, we often know exactly what to do next. If I learn that the fan belt on the family car is broken, then I know what to do: replace the belt. If my doctor tells me that my cholesterol level is too high, I also know what to do: alter my diet and exercise patterns to bring my cholesterol down.

We could take less effective approaches. Instead of replacing the fan belt, we could bewail the current state of fan belt technology (“Why can't they make fan belts that last forever?”). And we could complain endlessly about our lot in life (“Why did *I* end up

with a body that cranks out cholesterol like it's going out of style?”).

Those reactions are understandable. And the truth in this moment is that, for whatever reason, fan belts *do* break and cholesterol levels *can* get too high. Telling the truth about these facts and accepting them can lead to useful action. Complaining about them leads nowhere.



Full experience paves the way for full release

Moving toward love can reduce or eliminate many of the unpleasant experiences in our lives. When we totally experience discomfort, it often diminishes, and sometimes it disappears. This idea can apply to emotions, past traumas, and even physical pain.

You can use this technique the next time you have a headache. Make it your aim to love the pain—that is, to fully accept the pain and know all the details about it. Far from being solid, most pain has a wave-like quality: It rises, reaches a peak of intensity, and then subsides for a moment.

See if you can watch the waves come and go. Also notice if the pain has any “borders”: Does it seem confined to one area or does it ripple throughout an area of the body? If you were to associate a color, texture, or word with the feeling, what would it be?

You can do this with any emotion at any moment. Just describe the body sensations that accompany the emotion—perhaps a tight stomach, tension in the jaw, or sweaty palms. As you experience sensations, no matter how unpleasant, simply notice them and let them go.

When we accept, allow, and permit discomfort at any level, we pave the way for its release. That’s the power of moving toward love.



Practice loving it—part one

One way to get the hang of “loving it all” is to start small. Take a small problem—one that you may have decided you could live with for the rest of your life. Then see if you can apply the Success Strategy “Move toward love.”

First, describe the problem in detail without judging yourself or others. Then see if this attitude helps you discover possible solutions.

In the space below, describe the problem you want to work with. Then write about your experience in applying this Success Strategy.

The problem I have is ...

In moving toward loving this problem, I discovered that I ...

To solve this problem, I intend to ...



Practice loving it—part two

After doing the previous journal entry, apply the same process to a bigger problem. Again, in the space below describe that problem and how you choose to practice moving toward love.

The problem I have is ...

In moving toward loving this problem, I discovered that I ...



To solve this problem, I intend to ...
