

Containing Tension by Bob Fergeson

We are cowards, and what we witness about us is a dynasty of fear in a play house of desires. —Richard Rose

Most of us go through life with no clear awareness of our limited time and energy, but instead continue to plan and plot our way along as if nothing will ever really change. We live to have fun, known as the pursuit of happiness, making our forays into the world of pleasure from a base of imagined security. Driven by the fear that our security is tenuous at best, we rush to have even more fun, before the circle of our dissipation and paranoia collapses in on itself. We never question our motivations or bother to define what we mean by happiness, perhaps because of an inner intuition that that would take the fun out of it. Let's take a look at what this pursuit really is, and how it can be turned from a struggle downhill into frustration and bitterness into a change of being.

This pursuit of happiness can best be defined as the pursuit of a fading memory, a memory of a time when some outside agent gave us a thrill of such magnitude we can't forget it, or else it relieved our anxiety so well as to leave us in a state of unusual peace. Being creatures of habit, we try repeating the same sequence of events that gave us the previous result. This cycle is sooner or later found to be one of ever-decreasing returns. We find the thrill or release lessen, while the inducing agent is needed in ever greater quantity. We never question the process itself. We never wonder why we even need an outside agent in order to feel happy, at peace, or complete. Only when the agent turns on us, and becomes the deliverer of pain and misery instead, do we stop. Even then, we still seldom question the process, but think we can beat the system by getting a new, improved agent and becoming cleverer in its application.

As incredible as it sounds, an unhappy man does not realize that happiness is better than unhappiness. Knowing only his own concealed anguish, he worships it, which is the same as self-worship. —Vernon Howard

This unconscious trap of worshipping our own weakness keeps us from becoming strong. We fail to realize that the tensions we feel, as anxieties or promptings, are the very things that will free us from all need, if we stand up to them. By giving in to every prod and poke that comes into our consciousness, we give away our time and energy to nothing, and keep nothing with which to build our mental strength and intuition. Through resisting these daily irritations and promptings, we save our vitality and time, which can then be put to use on the spiritual path. We also become something, something that has a greater capacity. We can think clearer, have more time for study, and come to have a resistance to the inner noise, which used to send us running for distraction or numbness. We will have increased our capacity for storing tension dramatically, much like putting our money in a bank that pays high interest, to be used for something of true value when the time presents itself, rather than spending every dime in our pocket, and relegating ourselves to living paycheck to paycheck.



Eventually, we will also have gained enough inner quiet to possibly hear something from within, giving our intuition a chance to be heard.

Be very careful that you do not unconsciously assume that nervous tension is power. This is vital. Watch yourself the next time you work toward some goal. Look very closely to discover tense feelings and nervous thoughts whirling around inside. Do not let them deceive you into assuming that they are creative forces; they are not. They are thieves of genuine powers. As always, your awareness of their thievery is your first fine step toward casting them out. —Vernon Howard

The energy we feel as excitement or thrills, is not the energy we are after. This is just the frenzy of a nervous mind, of thoughts and needs wanting to take advantage of us in exchange for a brief moment of peace when our stolen energy is gone. True strength and peace is in an increased capacity for tension. By increasing this capacity, we increase our resistance to the effects of life. We become calmer in the face of stress, and can think clearer under pressure. By virtue of our increased intuition, we may even begin to see through many of the traps we formerly succumbed to. Our patience will increase, and we will not panic and run when unflattering truths about ourselves come into the light of day. We will be able to sit and meditate for the lengths of time necessary to gain insight into these truths about ourselves, no longer giving into distraction, fear or pride.

Through this reversal of the trap of dissipation into the discipline of containment, we gain a chance at freedom, and have become something more than a utility of forces unseen. We now have the possibility of using our limited time and energy in real ways in the pursuit of self-discovery. Our imaginary life of having our cake and getting to eat it, too, becomes instead a life with a true direction, towards truth and self-knowledge leading to real happiness. The Kingdom of Heaven is truly within, and we will not find it by taking our pleasure and meaning from without, from the world and its ceaseless change and pain.

The next time you feel an inner prod, an urge, an itch from below which you know can only be scratched at the price of your peace of mind, do not think that relief is in doing what it wants. Try resisting, turn away. We graduate from crawling by gaining enough strength to stand up and walk. Walking upright depends on having enough capacity for tension to resist falling down. Be patient, and learn to walk without wobbling. The view is better and you can cover greater ground. By this resistance, become something greater than the world, and take your meaning and definition from the silent strength you then find within.

To avoid action, thou must first determine for great action. —Richard Rose