

Unimportance



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In order to diminish your anger, anxiety or depression it might be helpful to diminish the importance of the situation that appears to be causing it. To the extent that the situation truly is responsible for the way you feel, it is the importance you assign to it that binds you and causes your suffering. If you are righteous or angry, it is in defense of something important or even sacred. If you are anxious or depressed, it is in fear of something important and terrible.

Fortunately, the world is big enough to put most things into perspective. Consider the vastness of space and time or just the range of experience and viewpoint among the people you know personally, let alone the billions who have lived in societies as diverse as prehistoric Mesopotamia or present day rural Cambodia. Consider that your parents might never have met, that you might have gone to a different school, spoken a different language, made different friends or chosen a different career. Consider that you might have been raised in a cult or accidentally had different thoughts as a child. Consider the massive contingency of your life and personality, and of your view on what is important and what is not. Consider, in particular, your mortality. Consider where in this meta-monumental range of possibilities your actual hopes and fears would fit, and how they might look from a broader perspective than the one you hold in your anger, anxiety or depression.

The realization of universal unimportance can be liberating and it need not entail despair, or even the loss of passion. You are free to assign importance to whatever you choose, even in the light of clear existential awareness. Choose wisely. This is not a trick. Trust me. Call me.

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