

# Hello from Ishwari



**October 2013**

**Sharing News, Inspiration, Tools, Events, Fun**

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## News

### LICENSURE

For over six years, I have been in private practice, practicing psychotherapy and counseling under the licensure of Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC). At this time, I am beginning preparations to obtain licensure as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC). My plan is to study during the month of December and sit for the exam in January. Practicing under the LPCC will afford me several new opportunities: I will be eligible to apply for in-network-provider status on insurance panels, and I may be in a more advantageous position to apply for and accept contract work with agencies and/or organizations.

I am not certain whether I will pursue either of these directions, as I am quite happy with my practice as it is, but onward momentum is a good thing, and it is time for me to go ahead and take these next steps toward obtaining New Mexico's terminal psychotherapy licensure. Wish me well.

### PERSONAL NEWS

On September 28, my daughter Tekla and my son-in-law Daniel, who live in northern Georgia, welcomed their third child into the world - my third grandson. Silas Currie joins his brothers Noah (4) and Kohl (not quite 2) in this bustling young family. Tekla and Daniel have a wonderful and easy way of parenting, and I am so grateful for their confidence and skill in raising these little guys.

I always knew I would enjoy being a grandparent, but what I didn't know was how special and lovely it would be to see my daughter grow into a competent and happy mother. Such a joy, on so many levels.

I hope you'll indulge me in sharing my happiness: I am including a couple photos of "my boys" on the next page.

## Inspiration

“Courage  
is fear  
that has said  
its prayers.”

-Dorothy Bernard



## BUNDLES OF JOY



Silas Currie, new little precious human being



Brothers: Noah, Silas, Kohl

## Events

I don't have any noteworthy professional events planned in the near future, but I am looking forward to traveling to Georgia to visit my daughter and her family, the week of October 19 through October 26. I'm not sure how I'll keep up, in a household with two rambunctious little boys and a newborn, but I'll do my best.

## Tools

As a counselor, I have collected quite a “toolbox” of useful exercises and activities, and I love to share them. I think both of the following exercises are brilliant in their simplicity. Each has the potential for greatly enhancing one’s quality of life. Try both of them and let me know how it goes.

### **HAPPINESS EXERCISE**

This was offered by Jan Bruce, Huffington Post.

“If you can wish someone well, you will feel happier yourself.” Chade-Meng Tan, Google engineer and mindfulness expert, posits that “where you direct your attention, and thus your thoughts, determines your peace of mind.” His ultra-simple exercise in happiness takes just 10 seconds each hour, for eight hours a day.

All you have to do is imagine two people - any two people - and for 10 seconds, do nothing but wish them happiness. Next hour, imagine two different people and wish them happiness for 10 seconds. That’s it: 80 seconds a day. This intentional attention shift, sustained for as little as 10 seconds at a time, can make all the difference in the world.

The exercise - turning your attention toward someone besides yourself, and focusing on a positive thought - helps you to “change the channel” of your thoughts, and in so doing, creates a burst of warmth, energy, and peace. The immediate result is felt by the person sending the wishes for happiness, but it can’t hurt the ones being sent this goodwill, either.

### **COMPASSION EXERCISE**

This is adapted from ReSurfacing: Techniques for Exploring Consciousness, by Harry Palmer.

Use it for cultivating compassion - for self, and for others. For healing, understanding, and forgiveness, do the exercise while focusing on someone you are angry or upset with.

**Self:** Focusing attention in your heart, say to yourself:

Step 1 Just like all human beings, I am seeking some happiness for my life.

Step 2 Just like all human beings, I am trying to avoid suffering in my life.

Step 3 Just like all human beings, I have known sadness, loneliness and despair.

Step 4 Just like all human beings, I am seeking to fulfill my needs.

Step 5 Just like all human beings, I am learning about life.

**Other People:** Focusing attention on the person, say to yourself:

Step 1 Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for his/her life.

Step 2 Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life.

Step 3 Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair.

Step 4 Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfill his/her needs.

Step 5 Just like me, this person is learning about life.

## Another Tool

Our brains are so powerful - for better and for worse. The positive exercises above reflect the “better”. However, sometimes we get caught up in the “worse”. Distorted and negative patterns of thinking, along with false beliefs, cause much of our suffering. The good news is that we can change these patterns and beliefs. The following material is from a handout I use with my clients to help them explore problematic thinking habits. The exercises are a little bit corny, but I find that “corny” actually helps to cut through some of our defenses. Actually, even a simple smile can be a powerful energy-shifter.

### **False Beliefs and Styles of Negative/Distorted Thinking**

**Negative Filtering:** You magnify negative details and filter out positive aspects of a situation.

**Discounting the Positives:** You believe that your accomplishments or positive qualities don’t count.

**Polarized Thinking:** You see things as black or white, good or bad. You may feel you have to be perfect or else you’re a failure. It’s all or nothing; you see no middle ground.

**Overgeneralizing:** You see a single event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

**Catastrophizing:** You expect disaster. When you hear about a possible problem, you expect it to happen and focus on “what if?”

**Minimizing:** You believe that if you ignore certain things, they will go away or not have any effect.

**Personalizing:** You believe that everything people say or do is some kind of reaction to you. You may often compare yourself to others.

**Mind Reading:** You believe you know what others are feeling and why they act the way

they do. In particular, you think you can tell how people feel about you, without their saying it.

**Blaming Others:** You hold others responsible for your pain. You see yourself as controlled by others, powerless, helpless, a victim.

**Blaming Yourself:** You believe that you are somehow responsible for the pain and/or happiness of those around you. If they are unhappy, it must be your fault.

**Fairness Fallacy:** You believe that life is supposed to be fair and feel resentment when it is not. You resent others when they don’t agree with you about what is fair.

**Control Fallacy:** You expect that you can get others to change to suit you, if you pressure, manipulate or cajole them enough. You believe that your happiness depends on getting others to change.

**Labeling:** You attach unrealistic labels to yourself or others. “I’m a loser” (or, “I’m a winner”), “he’s a jerk” (or, “he’s got it all together”).

Shoulds: You have ironclad rules about how you and others should act. You get angry, frustrated or resentful when other people break the rules, and feel guilty when you do. You may believe that punishing or shaming is an effective way to get yourself or others to “behave”.

Emotional Reasoning: You believe that whatever you feel, it must be true. If you FEEL stupid, you must BE stupid.

Being Right: You believe that you have to be right. You may continually feel the need to prove, to others and yourself, that your opinions and actions are correct and defensible. You will go to great lengths to explain yourself and avoid being wrong.

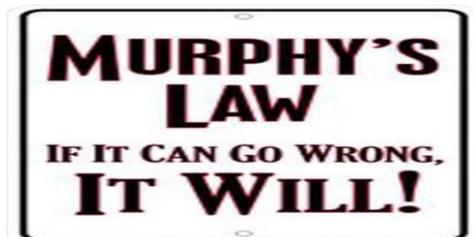
Heaven’s Reward: You expect sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if someone is keeping score. You may feel bitter when the reward does not come.

### **Exercises to Explore and Work with False Beliefs and Negative/Distorted Thinking**

#### **Bumper Stickers**

Purpose: To explore your false beliefs and negative/distorted patterns of thinking, and then to consider 1) when might that way of thinking be useful and true? and 2) when might it not be?

1. What types of negative or distorted thinking do you engage in?
2. State it as a belief. Make it into a bumper sticker or slogan. (Example: Catastrophizing = “Anything thing can go wrong, will go wrong.”)
3. Acknowledge any cleverness and/or humor you see in your bumper-sticker or slogan.
4. “Prove” the truth of that perspective, by giving examples of when you have experienced this to be true.
5. “Prove” the falseness of that perspective, with examples of when this did not hold true. (This might be a stretch but go on and do it. Imagine you are an optimist, and find at least one time this was not true for you.)
6. Write another slogan or bumper sticker that expresses the more positive perspective. (Example: “Sometimes, things go wrong, sometimes they go right.” Note: Don’t worry too much about making this bumper sticker clever or funny. This one is for you, and may or may not be for broadcasting to the world.)
7. Decide which bumper sticker or slogan you really want to base your life on.
8. See if you can think of times or circumstances when the negative perspective could actually be useful? Think of other times or circumstances where is more likely to be harmful.
9. Ironically, most people get some kind of need met by holding onto negative perspectives. Consider what need you might be meeting via this negativity, and then consider how you could get that need met in a healthier way. What in your life might change if you adopted the more positive one?



## Stick Figures

Purpose: To examine how false beliefs and negative/distorted thinking might be affecting you, and to consider whether there might be another way to look at things.

When you feel upset, take out a piece of paper and divide it into three sections.

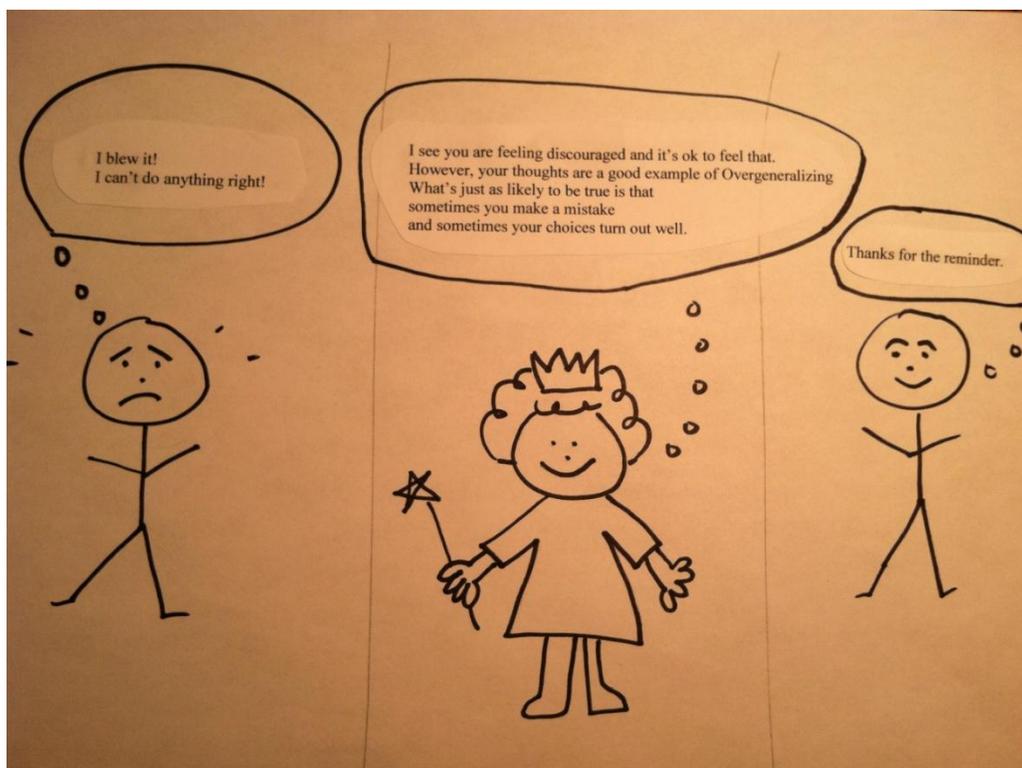
\*On the left side, draw yourself as an unhappy stick figure with a cartoon bubble. In the bubble, write what you-as-your-stick-figure are thinking; what you are telling yourself. Look through the Styles of Negative or Distorted Thinking and select any that apply.

\*In the middle section, draw a "Fairy Godmother." In her bubble, write what she would say to the unhappy stick figure, starting with "That is a good example of (the distorted style). What's just as likely to be true is that (think up a more positive way to view the situation)."

\*On the right side of the page, draw yourself as a happy stick figure. This is you, either with a super-positive attitude, or just after listening to the Fairy Godmother. In the happy stick figure's bubble, write the positive thought you-as-the-stick-figure might be having, that makes you smile. (Note: you don't have to believe in the positive thought, just see if you can dream one up and then imagine how it would feel if you DID think that way.)

\*Now, look back and forth between the unhappy and happy figures, and imagine how each one feels, with those thoughts. Which one do you want to believe? What is stopping you from choosing the happier one?

\*This last question is very important. Ironically, most people get some kind of need met by holding onto negative perspectives. Consider what need you might be meeting via this negativity, and then consider how you could get that need met in a healthier way. What in your life might change if you adopted the more positive outlook?



## Inspiration

I am often deeply affected by music. This song is not new by any measure, but is still and always beautifully moving to me.

I strongly recommend listening to the song, in addition to reading the lyrics. To hear it performed, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJlxipQoI30>. (By the way, I have nothing against the prudent use of antibiotics)

### Thank You

by Alanis Morissette

How 'bout getting off of these antibiotics  
How 'bout stopping eating when I'm full up  
How 'bout them transparent dangling carrots  
How 'bout that ever elusive kudo

Thank you India, thank you terror  
Thank you disillusionment  
Thank you frailty, thank you consequence  
Thank you, thank you, silence

How 'bout me not blaming you for  
everything  
How 'bout me enjoying the moment for once  
How 'bout how good it feels to finally  
forgive you  
How 'bout grieving it all one at a time

Thank you India, thank you terror  
Thank you disillusionment  
Thank you frailty, thank you consequence  
Thank you, thank you, silence

The moment I let go of it  
Was the moment I got more than I could  
handle  
The moment I jumped off of it  
Was the moment I touched down

How 'bout no longer being masochistic  
How 'bout remembering your divinity  
How 'bout unabashedly bawling your eyes  
out  
How 'bout not equating death with stopping

Thank you India, thank you providence  
Thank you disillusionment  
Thank you nothingness, thank you clarity  
Thank you, thank you, silence



## Fun (Good for a Laugh - or at Least a Smile)



**When you stumble, make it part of the dance.**

**“You wouldn't worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do.” -Eleanor Roosevelt**

**“I can resist everything except temptation.” -Oscar Wilde**

**“A laugh is the shortest distance between two people.” - Victor Borge**



A laugh is the shortest distance between two people.

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