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## Mirror, mirror on the wall, I am looking at you.

By: Che Nooryohana Zulkiffi

Have you noticed how often social media overflows with advice on avoiding negativity? One recurring message is to distance ourselves from those who drain our energy or make us doubt our worth. While that advice holds truth, the most powerful force in transforming our perspective and starting the day with confidence lies within us.

Think about it. Aren't we often our harshest critics? The moment we wake up, instead of embracing gratitude for the blessings of health, love, family, and purpose, we zero in on what we perceive as flaws. A glance in the mirror can feel like a magnifying glass for imperfections. We pick apart our skin, critique its tone, and convince ourselves that these imagined flaws make us unworthy of acceptance. We step back, scrutinise our bodies, and let self-doubt cast a shadow over our potential.



Stepping out into the world, this cycle of negativity continues. We shrink, and we convince that we don't belong, that we're too awkward or insignificant. These feelings often stem from unmet emotional needs, which perhaps a lack of affirmation from those closest to us, leaving us with fragile self-esteem. I believe that this inner void creates a spiral, and thus self-criticism feeds into the belief that others are judging us, even when that isn't the case. So, here's the red flag. It happens when we start seeing the world as adversarial, and it's often because we're projecting our own negativity. We misinterpret, judge, and assume the worst, unknowingly building walls against connections we deeply crave.

The foundation of a fulfilling life begins with gratitude for what we have (Witvliet et al., 2019). While this advice may seem hackneyed, its power is undeniable. Taking the time to count our blessings isn't just a cliché. It is in fact a transformative practice. Happiness, after all, is deeply personal. Though the presence of others can bring joy, true contentment must be cultivated from within. We can nurture this mindset by consistently practising empathy toward those who may be experiencing greater challenges than we are. This perspective helps us recognise that we are not alone in navigating life's difficulties. It helps us realise that hope is always present, showing us how it can lead to a more meaningful life.

If you ever find yourself feeling unhappy, address it promptly. Pause and reflect: what's holding you back from feeling at peace? Once you identify the source, focus on solutions. Remember, it's essential to concentrate on what lies within your control. Worrying about things beyond your reach will only deplete your energy and cloud your perspective (Veenhoven, 2015). Let go of what you can't change, and shift your focus to actions that empower you. Instead of seeking perfection, let's strive for acceptance. Let's choose gratitude over critique, courage over self-doubt, and kindness over judgment.

I also believe that staying grounded in the present is equally crucial. Avoid the trap of predictions and assumptions because they often lead to unnecessary negativity and self-criticism (McKenzie, 2018). Instead, anchor yourself in the here and now. Embrace your reality with courage, and let go of the urge to dwell on what could go wrong. By focusing on what you can appreciate and manage today, you pave the way for a more peaceful and contented tomorrow.

#### References

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