

POSITIVE THINKING

“All that we are,” the Buddha says, “is the result of what we have thought.” He means even physically, as I can try to illustrate. Suppose a person is habitually resentful: that is, he frequently responds to unfavourable circumstances by thinking resentful about the people involved. Many unfavourable consequences follow from this... I want to look only at those that affect bodily health. Those thoughts are seeds; if he keeps on sowing them, and particularly if he keeps watering and feeding them with his attention by brooding over them, they have to begin to germinate. All this takes place in the soil of the mind, out of sight. After a while, if favourable conditions persist, those seeds of resentment sprout. In the language of medicine, the physiological correlates of resentment – stomach tension, elevated blood pressure, and so on – become a habitual conditioned response, which any adverse circumstance can trigger.

For a more cheerful picture, look at patience. Isn't there a flower called *impatiens*, which they say anyone can grow any where? Anyone can grow patience too, though it's not yet one of the twenty favourite houseplants of the mind. And it is a highly medicinal herb. Imaging the person going through life with a garden full of patience instead of resentment. The same events that once provoked a stress response would be met with calmness, detachment, even a sympathetic respect. That person is likely to live longer and feel better than if he lived in chronic resentment: good health is the body reaping the harvest of right thinking.

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