



Finding Peace

By
Jack Roberts

May this book serve humanity by helping individuals to view the world in a more compassionate, peaceful way.

May this have a ripple effect that reaches out to everyone.

May we be united by our similarities and common humanity, rather than divided by our differences.

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Preface

I'm not a trained psychologist or religious leader. I haven't spent years meditating in a cave or suffered for years at the hands of brutal captors and found peace afterwards. I'm just an ordinary bloke who has suffered from anxiety, depression, drank too much at periods of my life, had both joyful and failed relationships, been successful in some jobs and failed in others. I've loved people which has sometimes been returned and sometimes not, plus I've been proud and arrogant then knocked off my perch to the satisfaction of others. My health is generally good but now in middle-age things feel like they're beginning to drop off or fail me. I've had loved ones die of illness and others who I've had to look after. I've had my house and car broken into on several occasions, I've been mugged and was bullied as a child.

All my immediate blood family are dead - my brother to alcoholism at 42, dad to a heart attack at 65 and my mother to cancer at 70 after prolonged illnesses, plus all my aunts and uncles at various ages. I have an ex-partner who committed suicide. I've been divorced although I am now happily re-married but I don't have any children.

I've never been in a major car accident, disabled, tortured, sexually or physically abused, badly beaten, imprisoned or hospitalised for anything more than routine operations.

So I have a wide range of personal experiences, some wonderful and many unpleasant, but nothing you probably haven't also had, to a greater or lesser degree.

This book is the result of a journey. Like everyone else on the planet, I have my hang-ups, fears and worries. I've always been interested in self-help and psychology and have studied both looking for 'the answer'. I have spent over one thousand pounds on therapy and investigated religion. None of them truly gave the 'answer' but all of them gave me something, although some more than others. What I've now realised is that they **couldn't** give me the answer because none of them **had** it, they only had bits of it, like individual jigsaw pieces. It was up to me to put the jigsaw together, which is what this book represents.

Over the last few years I have assembled the jigsaw pieces into a picture that works for me. It represents a framework that helps to release me from many of the hang-ups, fears and anxieties I have, giving me a sense of happiness and peace – or at least an understanding of why things are the way they are, and why I am the way I am.

I can't promise that my framework and view of the world will help you. But I do hope it helps you see which jigsaw pieces are most relevant for you and how you might assemble them in a more helpful way.

Introduction

This book is split into two parts.

The first part provides an overview of why the world is the way it is. We tend to think of the world as a static, fixed object that somehow owes us something, that if we do the right things it will give us what we want and expect. We think of it as something we are born into, then have to follow a set of rules in order to live successfully within it. It's as if the world is out there waiting for us and we then develop a series of expectations towards it. We say; 'if only we do the right thing, it will be kind to us'. This is wrong. Instead, the world is a living, dynamic organism that evolves based on what happens to the things and people within it and what everyone does. There are no 'rules for life'. The only real rule is that all actions have consequences, and this is what makes the world that we see around us. This first part presents the 'big picture'.

The first part also looks at our place within the world and how we have become what we are. It looks at what has made us the way we are and how our actions and thoughts create consequences that then govern our lives.

The second part explores some routes for living in a happier, more contented and peaceful way. It picks up the theme of consequences and effects and shows how we can move more towards actions and thoughts that lead to a more fulfilling life, including some techniques to aid the process along.

Many of us believe that it is possible to control life, but I believe this is a great misconception. Instead, life controls us. But this isn't a negative message, it's actually very hopeful. Rather than trying to make things happen in a certain way because we believe it will bring us happiness, we can instead open to what life presents to us, but in a more accepting and understanding way.

One of our big problems is expectations. We expect things to happen in a certain way because it's what we want to happen, then get disappointed when it doesn't turn out like that. But the problem isn't really how it turned out, it's that we expected and hoped it would be different.

This might sound like a very passive approach where we resign ourselves to everything rather than trying to make the world a better place or 'improve' ourselves, but it isn't. Instead, if we have an understanding of the way cause and effect works, we can see the consequences of approaches and then move more towards those which will bring beneficial outcomes. So it's actually very active and positive. It's about understanding and applying wisdom, rather than trying to control the uncontrollable and getting disappointed at the inevitable result.

We are told that if we work hard, pass exams, get a job, career, house, partner and all the other things society promises, then we'll be happy and everything will be fine. What we're not told is that it will lead to stress, anxiety, depression, excessive pressure and lost opportunities. We strive for things, hoping that it will make everything 'right' but then get disappointed when we don't get what we want, or lose it, or the novelty wears off, or we see someone with a better 'something' than we have. Bitterness, jealousy, anger and upset are the inevitable results of this.

It doesn't occur to us in any way that we might be responsible for what we see and experience around us, or what happens to us. We feel that the world happens **to** us, rather

than **because** of us. This is also what the concepts of fate or destiny indicate, as if everything is pre-ordained and our job is to live it out.

An alternative view is that we might be responsible for creating the world around us. What we personally experience and see in the world is a direct consequence of what we feel inside and what we do. What we see around us in the world is a consequence of the actions of those within it – including ourselves. So we have to take personal responsibility for what happens and what we choose to do. It's not anyone's 'fault', everything is a consequence of an action and our responsibility lies in what we create and how we react to what is created around us.

We can see how these cause and effect relationships work when applied to actions, speech and thoughts. If you say something, it will have a consequence. Loving, caring speech has a positive effect whereas negative, divisive gossip creates an unpleasant atmosphere. If your mind is downhearted and full of negativity, then everything you see around you will appear to back up this view. On the other hand, if your thoughts are joyful and peaceful, that's how you will see and perceive the world. Everything looks better on a sunny day when you're rested or on holiday.

If you drop a cup, it breaks. The cup didn't break because of fate or destiny, it was simply a consequence of dropping the cup, caused by gravity. If you walk out in front of a bus you'll get hit by it. It's no mysterious, external force or luck, it's a consequence of actions.

The way we perceive the world will also determine how we relate to it. If we perceive the world as harsh, then we will see harsh and unpleasant things around us that verify our opinion. If we are joyful, then we can spend hours getting pleasure from a daisy that other people wouldn't even see, or would tread on without giving it a second thought.

This overall way of viewing the world is like a giant, lifelong puzzle which doesn't really have an answer. Instead, it's a method of relating to the world that helps us to understand more about why it is the way it is, and why different things happen to us. It needs to be returned to again and again throughout our life and thought about in different ways, otherwise we will get caught up in the problems of the world. We will be caught up **in** the world, rather than relating to it in a more helpful, peaceful, understanding way.

A key point to remember here is that the way we relate to the world, i.e. our perceptions and understanding of causes and associated effects, might not actually make the world any different. But it **feels** different because of the way we relate to it. Happiness, sadness, anger and other such concepts are ultimately internal feelings, so we can work with them to view the world differently rather than trying to change the things around us.

I wish this way of viewing the world had been explained to me when I was still a child, rather than society and school sending me down the 'do the right thing' path. I call this approach '*The Great Swindle*', but that's perhaps an incorrect term as it implies intention. No-one (parents, society, teachers, etc) deliberately sends us down an unhelpful path, they just don't know any better and are only following what they themselves were taught. Perhaps it could be called '*The Great Travesty*' instead, as it's very sad.

Sailing can provide us with an analogy for the way we live in the world. Being in a dinghy going in a straight line when the water is smooth and someone has set the sail for us is easy. But when the wind changes direction or the water gets choppy we will struggle and feel adrift. We might then blame the weather or the boat or ourselves for being incompetent, but this is wrong. The real problem isn't that the weather changed or that we are useless, it's that we were never taught how to sail. So we don't know how to react to choppy water or a change in wind direction. It's like being told that everything will be fine and then we realise it

isn't but don't know what to do. If we are taught to sail then we will have no worries about the weather or water. We understand the mechanics of it and know what to do when circumstances change and things don't go to plan.

Our upbringing is the same. We are set out on a path but not taught the appropriate rules for living, we're not taught how to live effectively. So when our life doesn't go to plan, we blame everything else rather than realising that we were never taught how to live in a more helpful and effective way. It's not anyone's fault, no-one has done anything 'wrong', but when we do realise that we are in this situation it is up to us to find a way out, to learn how to live more appropriately and get more out of life. This book and the principles contained within can help if you do find yourself adrift.

Part 1 – Understanding Our World

This part of the book examines how the world we perceive is formed and how we as an individual have become who we are. Understanding both aspects are important as they give us a picture of why we are the way we are and why we experience the world way we do.

The first chapter demonstrates how the state of the world is a function of those within it. It follows, therefore, that if we wish to know more about the world and how it operates, we need to examine ourselves. We both influence the world around us and it influences us too. So the other chapters in this section provide guidance and tools on how to examine ourselves, and how to see who we have become and why. With this knowledge we can assess whether we are happy with it, or need to make changes. By knowing how we became the way we are, we will be in an excellent position to know how to make it different.

The world doesn't exist in the way we think it does. We have the impression of having been born into a static, unchanging object with rules that we have to work within. But it isn't like that. Instead, it's actually a continuously changing, dynamic organism that will evolve based on what the people of the world say, think and do.

The first chapter explores some of the wider aspects of this to give the 'big picture'. A big picture makes sense when looked at from a distance but begins to become a bit fuzzy when viewed close-up. So the first chapter shows how the wider world in which we live has evolved and continues to evolve, with subsequent chapters allowing you to delve into the detail of the big picture, i.e. you and your place in it.

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Grateful acknowledgement is given for the titles below which have been drawn on for the production of this text. A full list of other helpful resources can be found on the accompanying website www.finding-peace.co.uk.

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