

Being 'at Cause'

*Deceive yourself no longer that
you are helpless in the face of what is done to you.
Acknowledge but that you have been mistaken,
and all effects of your mistakes will disappear.*

A Course in Miracles

Have you ever noticed that in order to have any kind of problem, you have to believe you are suffering effects that you haven't chosen? "Bad things happen to good people." But when you look at this a little deeper, it is obvious that this requires thinking like a victim. Sometimes you can feel a victim of your own body or some foreign virus: Why has this illness happened to me! Or you can feel a victim in relationships: This person has hurt me! Or at work: They are always expecting me to do the impossible! Or the universe: Why doesn't my life ever get easier!

What is important to notice is that whenever you place the cause outside yourself, you completely give up all your power. In one fell swoop, you have given this outside source all control. You are now helpless and at their mercy. From this position, it is very difficult, if not impossible to create positive change. But why would anyone ever want to be a victim?

There are many payoffs:

Firstly, if you are the hard-done-by victim, you can probably feel injured and thereby gain lots of sympathy. By putting the guilt somewhere else, you can continue to think of yourself as the innocent good guy. You may get cared for, or more attention, or a sense of specialness.

Secondly, you divert attention away from how you are gaining from this situation. What you get to avoid, what you don't have to do, what you don't have to face.....and what you get to do instead! You get to stay in control.

Thirdly, you probably get to prove you are right about something, even if it is just moral outrage. Whatever has happened adds verification for your old beliefs and world views - which is one way of feeling secure and safe.

Sadly there are so many reasons why people choose to be victims, it is not surprising so few choose to be 'at cause'. In fact, most people refuse to even consider that they could be responsible because they immediately confuse that with being guilty. They are so used to attributing blame to others, that they think it just means blaming themselves, being guilty and feeling bad. But that is just another excuse for avoiding taking responsibility.

Truly being 'at cause' means taking responsibility, not blame. This requires seeing the bigger picture and being much more honest with yourself. You need to be able to look at the situation from a high perspective, and see beyond the immediate story to the underlying dynamics. What is the truth here? How have you contributed to this happening? In what way does this situation serve your conscious or unconscious desires? Sometimes the situation is just a replay of old events, some old wound that hasn't been healed yet. These old dynamics might be hard to discover, but the reward is more than worth it: you will get your power back.

Health issues often look like your body has been invaded by some foreign virus. This conveniently overlooks the fact that you must have created a great environment for that germ to thrive in, usually through poor diet, lack of exercise or overwork. The solutions for those are obvious. Or when a part of your body decides to malfunction as serious disease, it is easy to forget that such imbalances take years to create. If you want to be 'at cause', what mental and emotional issues have you not been dealing with? How has your life style contributed? These may not be easy or comfortable questions to tackle. It is easy to understand why most people prefer to believe that what goes on in their body is nothing to do with them.

I recently experienced a severe illness seemingly caused by a virus. It seemed to come out of nowhere, at a time when I was feeling very positive and productive. Rather than just suffer as a victim however, I began to question what unresolved issues might be involved. This exploration - although very uncomfortable - allowed me to discover hidden dynamics that had held me back all my life. As I let go of old painful emotions, grudges and unhelpful beliefs, I began to experience the illness as a rite of passage. The month of enforced rest gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate everything that is important in my life and emerge with more clarity and sense of direction.

Oddly enough, it is also true that if you insist that you are the cause of someone else's problem, you effectively dis-empower them. By making yourself the guilty cause, you distract them from discovering their own responsibility. You take away their power to change things, and they become dependent victims. Meanwhile, by flagellating yourself for wrong doing, your self punishment often includes withdrawing - which punishes them too.

So what's the plus side of being 'at cause'? When you take full responsibility for whatever is happening, you have the power to make new choices. You can acknowledge and rectify mistakes, find out why they were made, and find a better solution. Being 'at cause' puts you back in the driving seat. Instead of waiting for someone else to rescue you, you can return to your centre and act like an adult. Then you can take stock of things. No matter what is happening, there is always a way through that can lead to positive change and growth.

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*I am now the most miserable man living.
If what I feel was equally distributed to the whole human family,
there would be not one cheerful face on earth....I must die or be better.*
Abraham Lincoln

How to be 'at cause':

First, think of where you feel victimized: hurt, hard done by, let down, rejected, lied to, cheated, betrayed, cursed, unlucky, etc.

Also identify the areas in your life where you complain. Wherever you are complaining, you are attacking or victimizing someone else. Where are you feeling irritated, angry, punishing, acting in revenge, feeling sorry for yourself etc.? If you look deeply, these will be hidden places of feeling victimized.

Then note the areas where you feel you are to blame. Where you are feeling guilty and punishing yourself, you withdraw your energy and make yourself a victim of yourself.

Imagine what the rest of your life will be like if you continue to be a victim in these ways. How will this hold you back? What will you never get to do or be? How much time will you spend feeling unhappy? What is more important to you: being a victim or finding a better way to live your life?

If you are ready to change, look at all the ways you are benefiting from being a victim. Note the advantages, the gains, the avoidances, the attachments, and the beliefs it proves.

'There's gotta be a better way!' If you were an all powerful god, if you were successful, abundant and totally happy, what would you do instead? How would you behave? What would you choose to believe? How could you fulfil those advantages in a healthier way?

Could it be possible to do these things? Would you be willing to behave like this? When will you commit to choosing this path instead of being a victim? What new choices will open up to you as a result?

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