

# KEEPING YOUR SANITY BY REDECORATING YOUR MIND

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Believe it or not, you have a powerful resource inside

your head, one that can provide a reservoir of joy, strength and perseverance. Once you recognize it – and practice tapping into it – you can use it not just to boost your day but to improve the quality of your entire life.

Best of all, it's as straightforward as hanging a picture on the wall ...

Think about the photographs you have displayed in your home. Are they pictures of the miserable times, the disappointments, the conflicts, the traumas? Did you set things up so you are constantly reminded of the events and people who hurt you most?

Of course not. We've all had those times, of course. It's part of life. But when we put pictures on the wall of our home, we choose pictures of the people we love, the peak moments. We want to be reminded of how adorable our kids were at that age, or the great trip we took that summer, or a favorite quality of someone we love.

We do this because it affects the entire atmosphere of our home. It's part of what makes our house *feel* like a home. We may have boxes of pictures stored away that cover a wider range of experience, but what we want to see every day are the images that warm us, comfort us, inspire us.

In a similar way, we have images we reflect on in our mind's eye; memories of times past, of people and events.

We don't regularly reflect on that many images; probably about as many as the pictures we have hanging on our wall.

And just as the pictures on our wall create a mood in our home, the pictures we reflect on in our minds create an atmosphere within ourselves. What many of us don't realize is that we have the same ability to choose those internal images as we do to choose the pictures on the wall.

What images do you think of often? Do they warm you? Comfort you? Inspire you? Or do they remind you of regrets, disappointments, or painful events?

We can choose our internal mental images, but it's not as simple as replacing pictures on the wall. We can tell ourselves to stop thinking of a certain memory, or we can distract ourselves from thinking about it, and that can have some effect. But there's a better way that's a little less direct.

*When we actively search around in our past for painful events, it's sometimes called going on an "archeological dig." What I'd like to suggest instead is that you go on a treasure hunt. Search around your past for the people, events, and opportunities about which you feel grateful.*

It doesn't matter whether they are big influences or small, there are people, events, and opportunities in our past that have become buried over time, lost to the sediment of time and neglect. We've been told for so long by so many people that we have to remember what hurt us – from some schools of psychotherapy, through movies, TV, books – that many of us have forgotten to remember what has *strengthened* us.

The people, events, and opportunities that we're grateful for are sources of strength and resilience within us, just waiting to be re-discovered.

When I first purposefully did this many years ago, a person occurred to me who I had not thought of since my early teens. Mr. James was a math teacher at my Jr. High School. But he wasn't my math teacher; he taught a more advanced class than I was in, and I didn't know him at all. But one day he came over to me at recess, and told me that he thought I should be in his class, that I really belonged there, and he asked me to think about it. I told him that I would.

The next day he came up to me again, and asked me what I thought. I said, "Okay." And there I was the next day, in Mr. James's advanced math class.

I don't remember how well I did, and I never became a mathematician. This isn't a dramatic story of how I came to find my true calling. But I did have an experience of a man who believed in me who didn't have to; and who gently, respectfully, but directly challenged me to do better. When I think of that time and his confidence, I feel a little stronger, a little warmer, a little more settled in myself.

I hadn't thought of Mr. James in a very long time, but since the day I remembered what he did for me decades later, that memory has been one that comes to mind every so often. It's one of the pictures in my internal gallery. And because that one is there, some other one that maybe wasn't so great has been tucked away in the box with the other seldom viewed images.

The important thing here is to recognize that you have a profound choice. Practice making it a good one. If you find yourself ruminating about unfortunate experiences in your past – things you can do nothing about – remind yourself to knock it off.

Instead, replace that negative thought with a beautiful one: the award you won, your son or daughter's graduation, the birth of a grandchild, someone who thanked you once for making a difference. A picture framed

on the wall in your home.

When we actively search for the good people, the positive events, and the expansive opportunities that we've been blessed with, these images begin to take up space on the inner wall of our minds. And then, when we most need to be reminded of the solid ground we have to stand on, we'll find it right there.

If you want to improve the quality of your life, make a conscious effort to redecorate your mind. Things will begin to look very different. And I guarantee you'll enjoy the view.

PS: My new course, *Mastering Emotions, Moods and Reactions* can help you with this part of your life in much greater detail, with deep understanding and practical skills for mastering these systems and living well. And *A Master's Course in Happiness* can help you to take charge of your habits and your life in ways you may not have thought possible.

And I'm now offering both at a lower price.

You can also give a gift of *Mastering Emotions, Moods and Reactions* and *A Master's Course in Happiness* for a loved one or friend, simply by using their email when you place your order.

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*Joel F. Wade, Ph.D., is the author of The Virtue of Happiness, Mastering Happiness, his new course, Mastering Emotions, Moods and Reactions, A Master's Course in Happiness, and The Mastering Happiness Podcast. He is a marriage and family therapist and life coach who works with people around the world via phone and video. You can get a FREE Learning Optimism E-Course if you sign up at his website, [www.drjoelwade.com](http://www.drjoelwade.com).*

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