

The Power of Our Moods by Nicky Wilson-Harris

Background

Nicky Wilson-Harris Nicky Wilson-Harris is a Professional Certified Coach® (International Coach Federation) accredited as both an Integral and Ontological Coach. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, she has her own coaching and leadership development practice.

Nicky also serves as a coach, supervisor and educator for the South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP) where she facilitates the development of coaches at a Post Graduate level and supports the growth of coaching practice within organisations through leadership development training.

In 2014, the College showed interest in exploring Ontological Coaching and invited Alan Sieler to present an introductory workshop. Subsequently it has attracted greater interest and Nicky, one of Alan's graduates, has been invited over the last two years to speak at the SACAP Annual Festival of Learning. This year, her topic was "The DNA of Moods". The paper that follows was published on Heath24.com, formed the basis of a national television interview and accompanied her session at the Festival.

Moods

What are moods? Essentially they are emotions that hang around and continually influence our perception and behaviour. Moods can last from a couple of hours to decades and can become entrenched in our being. Moods are not all bad – many people experience long-term beneficial moods that continually give them a positive outlook and a beneficial disposition towards life.

While we are always in some sort of mood, shifting from one another, do we have the power to change our moods?

Sometimes our moods and their shifts are so subtle, they are barely perceptible.

Our moods are a blend of our feelings and our energy levels. Bright moods put a spring in our step and lightness in our hearts. Tough moods drag us down and weigh heavily on us.

The thing is that life forges on, regardless of our moods. Yet, moods have a significant impact on our ability in the moment to engage with others, make sound decisions, take effective action, think innovatively and perform physically.

Caught in the 'wrong' mood, we can fail to connect with someone who could be our greatest champion, choose a disastrous path, mess up an essential activity, find that good ideas are out of reach when you need them most and decide to have a 'stay in bed' day, just when the opportunities you have always wanted are ready to present themselves.

How do we get into a mood?

Moods and body

Our mood is not just about what's happening in our brain.

When it comes to moods, decisions and behaviour, the brain is not the only one doing the thinking. The part of body that is generally referred to as the gut is comprised of an estimated 500 million or more neurons that control not only digestion but influence the autonomy of physical and mental wellbeing. This 'gut brain', as it is commonly known, can influence the emotions that we experience.

The feel-good moments, the butterflies in the stomach or the overwhelming stress or anger that manifests in a fearful or resentful mood, all are influenced by the gut. We can find ourselves in an emotional response without being fully aware of how we arrived there, all of this activity happens automatically.

A change of mood

Just because we feel that our mood 'arrived' and took hold without permission, doesn't mean that we need to submit to it. There are many perspectives, tools, strategies and techniques that can help us to shift moods we know are not serving us well.

At the core of this is developing your capacity to recognise and name your commonly experienced moods, beyond 'good' and 'bad'. From this, follows an understanding of your individual mood triggers and patterns.

We each have the power to transform our moods.

What if you could manoeuvre in, around and through a mood with greater ease? There is an amazing space of choice in emotion and mood. You can learn to recognise, manage and decide how you want to experience your mood.

In many ways, a mood is a decision we have not made, it is something that we are generally surprised by. Often described as a fog, it seems to arrive in stealth mode like a silent ninja, creeping in – then, all of a sudden you are in it and it is very real. That doesn't mean that we need to get lost in it. By exploring your emotional default settings and experimenting, you can develop the emotional tenacity to get the best out of your moods.

What are some ways you already use to intentionally shift your moods – from unhelpful to helpful moods? What do others do to shift their moods that could be useful for you? How could you add to your repertoire of ways to better manage your moods and not remain a victim of them?

Nicky and others, in South Africa, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK, who have successfully completed the Graduate Diploma are skilled practitioners in assisting clients to develop long-term affective dispositions, or moods.

One of the interesting aspects of moods is that they are not only individual, they are also social, often being shared by groups of people. Constructive moods are essential for bringing about beneficial social change and part of Nicky's work involves her applying an ontological approach to moods to contribute to overcoming South Africa's education crisis.

Nicky is intent on making a difference and volunteers her time on projects that focus on improving standards of education or poverty alleviation. One such project is Partners for Possibility, designed to be a creative solution to South Africa's education crisis - it is a co-action, co-learning partnership between School Principals and Business Leaders, enabling social cohesion through partnerships, and empowering Principals to become change leaders in their schools and communities. The Partners for Possibility Program facilitates cross-sectoral reciprocal partnerships between Business, Government and the Social Sector.

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