

Take the 30-Day Mental Challenge

American philosopher William James (1842–1910) yearned to find a practical spirituality, one that produced concrete improvements in happiness. The Harvard physician grew encouraged, especially in his final years, by his personal experiments with New Thought, which he called “the religion of healthy-mindedness.” I challenge today’s seekers to continue James’s search for a testable, workable spiritual system. Will you join me in a 30-day experiment that puts positive-mind metaphysics to the test?

It is based on a passage from a 1931 book, “Body, Mind and Spirit” by Elwood Worcester and Samuel McComb, in which a prominent scientist described radically improving his life through a one-month thought experiment. I have condensed his testimony here: “Up to my 50th year, I was unhappy, ineffective and obscure. I had read some New Thought literature and some statements of William James on directing one’s attention to what is good and useful and ignoring the rest. Such ideas seemed like bunk, but feeling that life was intolerable, I determined to subject them to a month-long test.

“During this time, I resolved to impose definite restrictions on my thoughts. In thinking of the past, I would dwell only on its pleasing incidents. In thinking of the present, I would direct attention to its desirable elements. In thinking of the future, I would regard every worthy and possible ambition as within reach.

“I threw myself into this experiment. I was soon surprised to feel happy and contented. But the outward changes astonished me more. I deeply craved the recognition of certain eminent men. The foremost of these wrote me, out of the blue, inviting me to become his assistant. All my books were published. My colleagues grew helpful and cooperative.

“It seems that I stumbled upon a path of life and set forces working for me which were previously working against me.”

Let’s repeat this experiment together. Choose your start date, write out the above passage and add: “I dedicate myself on this day (date it) to focus on all that is nourishing, advancing and promising for 30 days” and sign it.

Email me your results (or questions) at 30DayMentalChallenge@gmail.com. I will report the outcome in a future column. ☘



MITCH HOROWITZ

is editor-in-chief at Tarcher/Penguin and a PEN Award-winning historian. He is the author of “One Simple Idea: How Positive Thinking Reshaped Modern Life.”