

Morals and Ethics

How They Affect Our Mental Health

Exactly how much does our ethics or moral code impact our emotional or mental health? Is it possible that the values that we live by actually impact our mental well-being? Are we endowed with some deeply mystical code that is designed to guide us through life? And does adherence to that code somehow keep us healthy? Are these codes simply irrelevant to our own health, or do they really exist at all?

The Human Code

It's interesting that we each appear to have a deeply inherent sense of right and wrong. Call it our conscience, or that "inner voice," or some old tapes playing in our heads from our parents. Call it what you will. Whatever the label, it seems to be there. Oddly enough, most of those deep moral codes transcend cultures and time, with an apparent adherence to fundamental beliefs of good and bad, right and wrong. James A. Fordue wrote "Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity." Whatever the case, there appears to be a conscience or inner voice that speaks that moral and ethical code into our lives and our minds.

Whether we abide by this conscience and inner voice is one thing. It seems to make us feel good when we abide by it, and it chastises us when we don't. We can ignore it to the point that we barely hear it anymore, or we can override it by justifying and rationalizing our choices or our actions. We can pick and choose, heeding it when we feel it benefits us, and passively or actively ignoring it when it doesn't. We're prone to turn a blind eye to it if it's asking a bit much of us or inconveniencing us, and we will tend to heed it when there's some sort of benefit in doing so. We deal with it and navigate it in many ways, but it certainly appears to be there.

What Is Its Purpose?

If it's there, what is its inherent purpose? I would assume that something that seems to be possessed by most everyone, and something so tenacious and powerful would have a clear and intentional purpose. It would appear to make sense that the inherent 'good' in this conscience or inner voice is designed to produce good or positive outcomes.

For whatever reason, we have been granted a conscience or inner voice that seems bent on relentlessly seeking out and bringing to pass that which is good. It seems to stand in direct opposition to all that is bad, which may in part explain the rationale for its existence.

It may be the very thing that allows us to clearly recognize that which is bad for us. Likewise, it may allow us to intelligently and intentionally battle all that which is bad. Or, it may be the thing that gives us hope that despite all the bad around us, good actually exists and good can actually prevail. And we can know it with conviction because it's in us.

It may well be that our conscience or inner voice gives us hope. In the horrific events that life sometimes brings, that deep sense may convince us that good exists even though we can't see it. It may also provide us a way to bring good out of bad as it seems to be some sort of internal road map telling us where to go and where not to go. That conscience or inner voice may be that slightest glimmer that relentlessly flickers in our deepest darkness, telling us that something good and something better is out there. Whatever it is, it smacks

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of something healthy.

Outcomes of Health

Even more interesting, suppose that each of us were to abide by this internal voice. What if we rigorously adhered to it and abided by it? What would our world be like? What would our marriages and our families and our relationships be like? It's difficult not to imagine that things wouldn't be a whole lot healthier. By and large, that conscience or inner voice seems to prompt us to do the things that result in hope and healthy outcomes.

That being said, actions that are genuinely dictated by the conscience or inner voice likely lead to healthy results. Those results can be material or financial, but it would seem that true health is about mental, emotional and even spiritual well-being. It seems to follow that healthy actions and choices lead to healthy results. In a terribly imperfect world, that may not always be the case. However, it would appear to play out in the majority of instances. And if healthy outcomes are the result of healthy choices that have been guided by our conscience or inner voice, how much would that impact our mental and emotional health?

Holding Us Above the Fray

I would wonder if our conscience and inner voice holds us above the frayed and tattered pieces of our world? I wonder if they keep us from being pulled into, trapped in and eventually consumed by a world heavy with pain and thick with frustration? Are morals and ethics, and the conscience and inner voice that speak them to us the things that will hold us fast when our world's spin us with pain, deaden us with frustration, plague us with confusion, layer us with angst and drive us to disorientation? Are they an internal GPS of sorts that are programmed to lead us to healthy outcomes?

In thinking about this, it's not about good and bad, or right and wrong. It's much more about what makes a healthy life. It's a whole lot more about what allows a life to be successful, genuinely meaningful and rich. It's about having lived life having maximized every ounce of energy, every gift and every talent. It's about living life to the fullest, having done so by effectively navigating it all based on the ethics and morals that our conscience or inner voice have spoken into our lives and our situations. I think that's what this is about. I'm predisposed to think that this is health.

Think about what you base your life on. What drives you? What guides you? What dictates your choices and your actions, whether those be simple and of little weight, or those be monumental and life altering? What are you doing with the conscience and inner voice? Is it an annoyance, or is it a terribly precious guide? Your health may be effected, even dictated by it.