

OUR EGO IS OUR WORST ENEMY

by Edward Clark

As depicted in cartoons and commercials, the devil sits on one shoulder and an angel sits on the other, competing with contrary persuasions. This is actually more factual than we care to believe. The "devil" is actually our ego, and the "angel" our conscience. Ego is the misguiding force in the private sector and public sector, including governments. It is responsible for wars, genocide and allowing famines to continue in poor countries and poverty in wealthy countries.

Our ego is nothing more than an idea that we carry around with us everywhere we go, and tells us that we are the total of what we have and what we do. It insists that we are in competition with every other person's ego, and must be wary of all others at all times.

The question is, do we allow our ego to control us, or do we control it. Allowing our ego to be in control is responsible for the "us against them" mentality, and leads to violence, especially in prison. It emplores us to be better than everyone around us while at the same time telling us we are inferior and must prove ourselves, resulting in arguments, fighting and cowardly assaults against those who can't defend themselves.

Our ego is never content. If we let it, it can keep us in a constant state of fear, worry, anxiety, stress, turmoil, and judging others. If we choose one thing, it will attempt to persuade us to consider something else, so we never find peace. If we surrender to our ego, and the turmoil it creates it weakens us emotionally and physically.

How To Control Our Ego

We must first recognize that every action we take originates with a thought, and what we think about expands into action, whether it

("Our Ego-" continued)

strengthens or weakens us - positive thoughts strengthen, negative thoughts weaken. The more conscious we become of the way we use our mind, the more we are able to leave behind negative ways of thinking. When we know our thoughts expand into action, we become very careful about what we think because our thoughts can literally poison our lives.

Be aware that in any given moment we have a choice about the thoughts we allow in our minds. No one else can put a thought there. It is nothing more than a conscious decision on our part to be in charge of our thinking. Regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in, it is our choice.

By practicing letting go of our ego's needs to be separate from others, we begin viewing ourselves as a member of the human family and more tolerant and less controlled with a false pride.

So through a little conscious practice, we have the ability to monitor ourselves at all times to determine our relative state of weakness or strength, and to shift out of those negative thoughts that weaken us. When using our mind to empower us, we are appealing to that which uplifts and raises our spirits. In this way, we keep ourselves in a higher state of consciousness, avoiding confrontations, making each day, whether in prison or in society, meaningful, productive and true to ourselves - and that is wisdom.