

## It's Up To You

by Amy G Martin, APRN, RhD

Have you ever thought about how tenuous our ego strength would be, if we labeled ourselves acceptable or unacceptable according to others' opinions? How do we become wise enough to not take so much stock in other peoples' estimation of us?

If I offer myself or my gifts to someone and they accept them gladly and with appreciation, it might make me feel good about myself and who I am. On the other hand, if I offer the same to another person who rejects me, I might feel devastated. The answer to all this must be to be strong enough within ourselves to be unaffected.

What do we need to do to remember our goodness and strength and balance without anyone else reminding us?

If you have had the fortune to have had successes in your life and understand that your basic nature is good, then you have what it takes to build your own sense of self or self esteem. But what if you have never had those positive experiences? Is it still possible to turn your life around?

I recently came upon the writings of a man named Epictetus, born a slave in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the time of Nero. Beaten and tortured, it was known that he became crippled when his leg was deliberately fractured. When he was eventually freed, rather than becoming bitter and broken, he became a respected teacher and philosopher, extending the shift in thought, that perhaps our perceptions have more power than the events in our lives, and that it's all really up to us, as to how we see ourselves. This is an excerpt from one of his writings:

### *It Depends On You*

*“Wisdom... demands before everything else, that we distinguish clearly what is within our power and what is beyond it. The wise man knows ... what little mastery we have, is over one thing alone, our attitude toward what happens to us. On the other hand, what happens is, like the fall of the dice, entirely outside of our control.*

*External conditions... make us neither happy nor unhappy; for our true welfare does not depend upon (anything outside ourselves), but upon our ability to dominate what comes and to (begin to believe) in the wealth of our own untried resources. As long as our peace of mind is bound up with attainment or avoidance of what is outside ourselves, we are slaves; when we direct our striving solely toward conscious self-mastery in our response to circumstance, we break our fetters. Assail us what will, our well-being is secured.*

*Life then rises superior to every challenge. Misfortune is good fortune. Possessions, friends and relatives, health, popular applause, you regard, not as essential to your satisfaction, but as a loan, which you enjoy or relinquish at will. The loss of such things*

*does not harm the dauntless heart. Faults of others will not disturb you; you did not expect them to be faultless. You will not demand that no one do you injustice. Even the most evil of men you will only pity for his ignorance and wretchedness. You will be beyond the range of those acts of their fellows which drive so many to distraction; for you know that such conduct is part of the nature of things, urging you only the more gladly to fall back upon the god within.*

*Thus it is that a man may win deliverance from bondage. He can, with serenity, accept even the hardest lot, and turn it to good, as one who has found that the secret of a tranquil mind, lies within himself.”*

I think of this man in a life of slavery, still able to maintain his self knowledge, and wonder how we might learn from this. Even the mildest challenges stump us at times! If our lives don't go according to plan, or if the response we receive from others is not what we hoped, can we find that tranquility within to remember who we are? Can we look beyond the imperfections of ourselves and others?

It's time to turn around and truly accept ourselves. Every difficulty in life can be seen either as a punishment or a gift; *it really is up to you.*

Please send questions or ideas for future subjects to me at [amymartin@time4healing.com](mailto:amymartin@time4healing.com) and please include “Time For Healing” in the subject line.

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Amy Martin is a Doctor of RoHun Transpersonal Psychotherapy and a Nurse Practitioner. RoHun Therapy is an alternative to traditional psychotherapy. Her private practice, “Healing Therapies”, is located at 8 West Main St, Suite 1-3 Niantic, Ct. Call for a consultation. (860)691-0743, or go to [www.Time4Healing.com](http://www.Time4Healing.com) for more information.