

Chapter 9

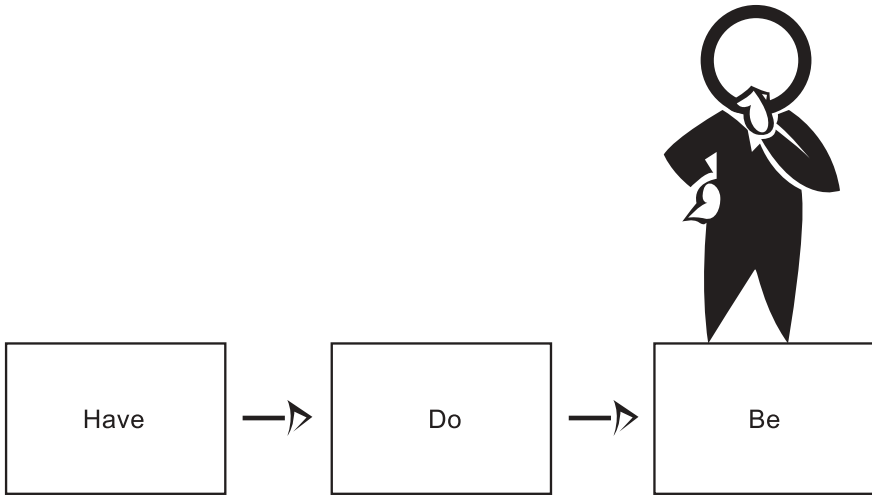
Have-Do-Be or Be-Do-Have?

“If you want to be somebody else, change your mind.”¹

Song lyric from “Change Your Mind”
Sister Hazel

As we move toward the end of this volume, I’d like to return to our collective *pursuit of happiness*, and to the Dalai Lama’s “great question that confronts us all”: *How am I to be happy?* Let’s begin with how many of us in the modern West appear to be answering this question. In many ways, our modern American and Western culture supports and encourages *consuming things*, and the term *consumer* is not used in a negative way when it’s applied to us, either as individuals or groups. Today’s advertising and marketing industries, in a great many fields, are actively courting potential consumers by consistently reinforcing and promoting a particular link between *having, doing and being*. It may be explicit or implicit, out loud or in the background, but the linkage can be summarized as:

Language and the Pursuit of Happiness



If you *have* this, you can then *do* that... which then causes or allows you to *be* whatever.

If you *have* this beer, you can *do* things like hang out at upscale clubs surrounded by wonderful, ambitious, and exciting women and men, dancing and remembering exciting things you've done together, and then you'll *be* cool, self-assured, in the "in" crowd... and happy. If you *have* this car, you can *do* things like drive up mountains and across deserts, or on sleek super highways, which will then have you *be* rugged, independent, confident... and happy. If you *have* this kind of golf club, you can *do* things like drive it straight every time, and then you'll *be* a winner, confident, successful... and happy. If you *have* this particular vacation, you can *do* things like stroll the beach with your loved one and go out to tiki hut restaurants, which will leave you *being* rejuvenated, refreshed, satisfied... and happy. I could, you could, we all could go on and on here. Does this make sense? This promise may be out in the open or somewhere in the background, but in our culture, it is there. It's all around the central premise of *have—do—be*, in this direction.

This is ingrained in—and underneath—a steady stream of messages that we've gotten for many years. It's so pervasive and built-in that it moves to the background of our thinking as one of the "givens," one of the "facts." It's often totally taken for granted. And yet when we do acquire many of the things that we wanted to have, we find that we're still not happy, not peaceful, not enjoying the journey very much. Many of us

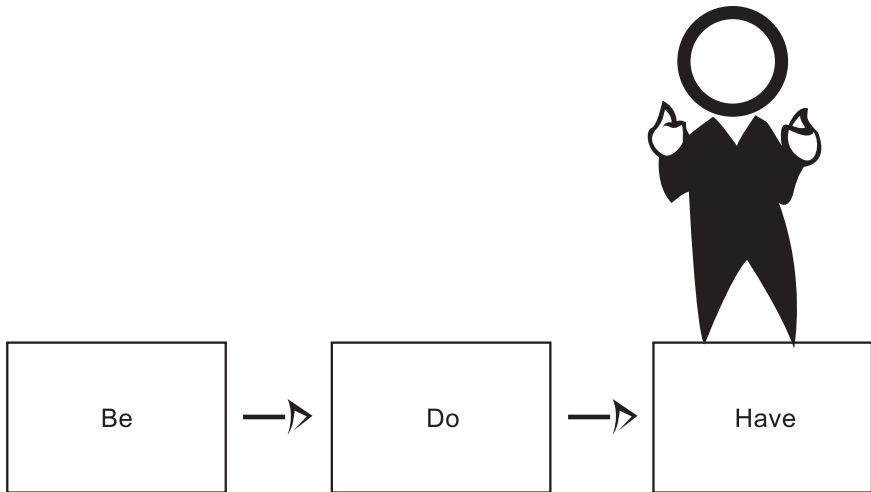
Chapter 9 – Have-Do-Be or Be-Do-Have?

have had this experience, where the *having* has not brought forth the *being*, where having X has not translated into being Y.

Having this experience, and having enough of these experiences over time, can often lead to a willingness to really re-think the whole equation. To really re-think the connections which exist between having, doing and being. *Of course, if we change our thinking around this it will change all sorts of things!* Can you see how this is so? New possibilities for taking action will show up, new ways of being purposeful about our own growth and learning will appear, new choices available for designing our own lives will show up.

* * *

The more powerful interpretation, by far, reverses the direction and is summarized this way:



Here, we start with *being*. This model, this interpretation, has us first *be* a certain way (including being in the present, as best we can). By then *doing whatever* we do from that way of being, over time we end up *having* what we want. And in more ways than one, seeming to also *want* what we *have*! With this model, as a byproduct somehow, the entire *have* portion of the model becomes less important. This is, obviously, a direct reversal from what many of us have grown up with, lived with, been bombarded with from all angles, and taken for granted.