

Lefkoe Freedom Course
Handout #1

This paper spells out the difference between beliefs and “occurrences” and defines some of the most important terms we will be using in this course.

There is a crucial difference between a belief and an occurring

Beliefs are the meaning we give (usually) to a series of events. Beliefs are broad generalizations, for example, I am People are Life is A belief is a statement about reality that we feel and act is the truth, although it is possible to intellectually disagree with something we believe. Once formed, beliefs continue to exist and affect our behavior, feelings and perceptions forever, unless we are able to eliminate the belief. We view life through the filter of our beliefs.

Our occurrences, on the other hand, are the meaning we give to a specific event in reality, in other words, how reality occurs to us at a given moment. Each occurring is a distinct meaning that usually lasts only a short time and then fades away by itself when we stop thinking about the event. An example of an occurring is your boss asking you a question and it occurring to you as she doesn't trust me, she doesn't like me, or I'm going to get fired. That is the **meaning** you have given to the boss's question. In reality all that happened is that she asked you a question. Contrast that occurring—the meaning you gave to that specific event—to beliefs that act as a filter through which we view all events, such as *No one trusts me. No one likes me. I can't keep a job.*

Why occurrences are so important

Usually we don't distinguish between reality and how reality occurs for us (our occurring), so we think the meaning we give reality IS reality. Because we think our occurring IS reality, we interact with our occurring, not reality.

For example, losing our job is a fact in reality, seeing it as a disaster or a great opportunity are two possible ways the event can occur for you. You can “see” that you no longer have a job. You can't “see” that the job loss is a disaster or an opportunity. If your job loss occurred to you as a disaster, you would try to deal with “a disaster,” instead of with a job loss, which probably would have you feel and behave differently.

I want to emphasize that the reason this distinction between reality and our occurrences is so important is that most people rarely distinguish between them, thereby acting as if their occurring **IS** reality. **In other words, we rarely deal with what is actually in the world; we deal with the meaning we have given what is in the world, a meaning that exists only in our own mind.**

The simple distinction between beliefs and occurrences

Can you see that beliefs are broad generalizations that filter your view of all events, while occurrences are “one time” meanings you give to specific events that do not affect the meaning you give to similar events in the future?

Your long-held beliefs are NOT occurrences. Occurrences require, by definition, an event, either in your mind or in the world. An occurring is how an event occurs for you. If there is no event, there is no occurring.

Beliefs are the major source of our occurrences

Is it now clear that beliefs and occurrences are two totally different phenomena? There is a relationship between them, however, in that beliefs are the major source of our occurrences. In other words, **how a meaningless event occurs for us is determined mainly by our beliefs.** (Other determining factors can include our mood, physical condition, and stage of development [see almost any of Ken Wilber’s books for details on stages of development]. I also think that as a result of evolution we are predisposed to negative occurrences.)

Change your beliefs and you can change how events show up for you. For example, if you believe, *People are stupid*, they will occur for you that way. Eliminate that belief and your future occurrences probably will change.

It is important to realize that it is possible to dissolve an occurring without eliminating any beliefs. On the other hand, if you don’t eliminate the beliefs that are causing a occurring, you will continue to have similar occurrences when similar events happen in your life.

Define a few relevant terms

Let me define a few other terms that are relevant to this discussion. First, **reality**, by which I mean what actually happens in the world. Events. What you know through your five senses, especially what you can see or hear. What you usually could capture on a video recording. Sometimes “reality” can’t be “seen” because it is inside your mind, such as thoughts, memories, projections of the future, and physical sensations. We can give all of these meaning, so we can have occurrences about all of them.

The next term I want to clarify is “**No meaning.**” Events in reality have no inherent meaning. In other words, you can’t draw any inferences or make any predictions—for sure—as a result of observing any events, including internal events such as memories or physical sensations. **All meaning, therefore, is in your mind.**

This idea can be difficult to prove to someone who hasn’t experienced it. I hear all the time: “Of course events have meaning! Doesn’t dying have meaning? Doesn’t it

mean something if someone treats you badly?” The best way I know to make this idea real is to experience it when you do the Lefkoe Belief Process, where you experience clearly that mom’s and dad’s behavior had no inherent meaning, that the way they treated you meant nothing about you or even about them.

Our occurrences cause most of our feelings

The third idea I want to clarify is: **“Reality can’t cause feelings.”** Reality/events are unable to make you feel anything because they have no inherent meaning. The primary source of your feelings is the meaning you give to events.

For example: If you don’t get something you want and you give it the meaning: I can’t get this thing and I never will—you probably will get upset. If you give it the meaning: I haven’t gotten what I want yet, so what do I have to do to get it?—you probably will feel challenged and excited. **The meaning we give events is the primary source of our feelings. Thus, dissolving your occurrences enables you to simultaneously dissolve negative feelings, such as anxiety, anger, and upset.**

In other words, beliefs are a primary determinant of our occurrences, and our occurrences cause most of our feelings.

For example, imagine that your boss walks in your room and says to you: “Is the project complete yet?” That is the reality, what actually happened. That might occur to you as she is dissatisfied with me, or my job is in jeopardy, or I screwed up this project. That occurring, in turn, might have you feel anxious or possibly even angry.

I needed to eliminate a lot of beliefs (and some conditionings) to get rid of my depression, my neediness, my need for the approval of others, and a bunch of other problems. But I still had many occurrences daily that caused little upsets. When I stopped giving meaning to events, these minor upsets stopped almost completely.

Because getting rid of beliefs and occurrences are two totally different processes, it is possible for you to dissolve your moment-by-moment occurrences without having to eliminate any beliefs.

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