

CONTROLLING YOUR REALITY

Brittany Andrews sits with holistic therapy instructor, Dina Lahlou.

If you're anything like me, you may be a bit sceptical about the actual benefits of dishing out tonnes of dough to learn about why you may or may not be unhappy with your life. I've always been the self-help type, preferring to figure my problems out for myself rather than go to some stranger with weird advice. And of course, some scepticism is warranted in this field. After all, we all know that there are tons of hacks out there and many a self-help book filled with common sense ideas you easily could've come up with on your own and kept your JD20. But having met with Dina before and verifying that she was the real thing; I attended the first day of Dina's three-day course with a slightly open mind.

I'm sorry to admit, the first hour of the course; I sat in the room feeling a bit superior. I did not need to explore myself and my thoughts to improve my life; my life was pretty good already. But about an hour in, I found that I wasn't thinking from the perspective of a detached observer, but rather an attentive participant. I was converted! Not only did I see examples in my own past, my own experiences, that proved what Dina taught us – the power of thought over our reality - but I also realised my own shortcomings: things that I was unhappy with in my life, which I took for a given, but that I had the power to change. Leaving the class, I felt energetic and ready to take on the challenges in my own life.

I wasn't the only one. Most of the participants who took the course remarked that they wished it had gone on longer, and one who I spoke with had even signed up for one-on-one lessons, as well as another group session this month. When asked what the biggest thing she took away from the class was, she remarked, "I guess it was not doubting myself. It's really the power of thought that affects the way you perceive life. It can make life amazing or it can make it depressing." After hearing what Dina had to say, I couldn't agree more.

Tell me about what you do.

I wanted to present and to transmit what I received and what I benefited from in terms of body, mind and spirit. None of us is the same person today as we were last year, or five years, or six years ago. So I say, since I'm changing anyway, let me chose the path I'm going to take. This work is based on what I'd call quantum thinking. Everything is energy. Our thoughts are impulses of energy. This energy is creative and intelligent; therefore whatever I think is going to manifest in my reality. So starting from that principal, I can create what I call my road map - in terms of my physical being, my emotional being, my spiritual being, my professional life and also my relationships - and align my belief system to make sure that they don't contradict. All this requires awareness so what I focus on in my workshop and also in my practice is increasing self-awareness. It is the base of everything.

How did you learn about it in the first place?

Well, we call it the path or the journey of self-awareness, of self-discovery, of knowing thyself. It's not something that happens overnight; often it's a wakeup call when somebody encounters challenges in his or her life, and then you turn and you look for

help outside. As they say, *when the student is ready, the teacher shows up*, so in my case, I was very blessed because I had a great teacher who resonated with me.

How does someone become self-aware and what does that help them do?

We are the only living beings who are aware, who have this consciousness, you know, of being alive. But we don't really use it today because our lives are mostly directed towards our outward activities. Basically, that's the first step: to go inward and explore what's in there, what triggers our reactions or behaviour. It is realizing that your reality is just a translation of your thoughts. But we are often not aware of what we think – we have about 65,000 thoughts a day and 90% are in our subconscious and repetitive. If we don't know what is there, what I call personally Pandora's Box – our subconscious – and how it functions, we are surprised by why our reality is the way it is. Everything starts as a thought, as an idea. It's the starting point of all our actions, and our actions become our life experience, then our reality. So our reality is what we create for ourselves.

What motivated you to share what you learned with others?

I think it's because I'm a teacher by vocation. I actually stumbled into teaching by accident! I've been teaching since 1996. First, I taught university and then, when I came to Jordan, I started teaching High School. The subject that I'm very lucky and privileged to teach - Theory of Knowledge - allowed this reflection, this critical thinking. And I guess being a teacher by vocation, I just like to take things and put them in a way that they can be transmitted – it's fun for me. So I do what's fun for me.

In your classes, you ask people what they hope to accomplish by being there. Do you find that most of the participants attend for a certain reason?

Everyone has an agenda. This was the first time I've given the workshop in Jordan, but I've given it in Morocco; I've given it in France, in Bahrain. There is a general trend, yes. But I'm doing this not to find a trend, but for them to determine their goals. When you have a very clear objective, you have a much higher chance to reach it. We don't think often; we just move through life and do things and we don't even know why. So just for them to have it clearly written, in black and white, automatically it will stick to their subconscious and they will be able to direct their work towards that.

What's better about a holistic therapy approach rather than traditional therapy?

I think neither is better; it just depends on what suits each one of us. Some people would gain more utilizing traditional medicine. Personally, I believe traditional or modern medicine has brought us a lot, but it also has its limits because it treats the person in a mechanical way. The holistic approach links everything together and makes the person realise how the belief system and our thoughts affect our physical well-being. Our mind doesn't work on its own or our body on its own. Everything you are exposed to affects our being, the way we think, and the way we function. So that's why I call it holistic, because it's a comprehensive approach to treating the human being as a whole, not mechanically.

What do you think it takes for someone to find inner peace and happiness?

It's not a goal; it's a journey *(laughs)*. You cannot be only happy and you cannot be only at peace 24/7. It would also be boring *(laughs)!* We live in a world of duality, of polarities. We have to go through chaos at some point in our life, but that's okay because there is growth in everything. The thing is figuring out where one is at, reflecting and asking the right questions of oneself, and then asking God – or whatever you believe in – for help. Then, as I said, when the student is ready, the teacher shows up. It's about

taking responsibility for your life, because nobody's going to make you happy. At the end of the day, it's only about you.

It seems to me that holistic medicine is gaining popularity. Why do you think that is?

We get to learn from everything. The traditional medical practice has been a gift to many; it has saved many lives, but at the same time it also has brought some not-so-good-things – for instance, when people have problems and they think that a pill can fix it. Often this is just like putting it under the carpet. But I think it's gaining in popularity because there is a rise of consciousness; there is awareness now that there is not only one way.

Any plans for the future? Will you stay in Jordan?

Probably for a little while, but I'm travelling a lot and I'll be giving classes between here and my other home – Morocco – and my other home – France. I am exactly in the process of deciding right now.

BOX OUT

What's your favourite colour?

It's the one I wear every day. So today it's this blue-gray; tomorrow it might be pink.

What's on your bedside table?

Books and a candle.

Where was your favourite vacation?

There are so many, so my favourite one is always the one I'm going on next. (*"Where are you going?"* I ask.) I don't know yet (*laughs*).

Beach or mountains?

Definitely ocean.

Coffee or tea?

I like coffee for the smell, but I prefer tea.

What's your star sign?

Sagittarius

What has been the most important thing in your life so far?

Probably living in Jordan, or maybe being in Jerusalem, having the privilege to go.