

Most of us divide-up our life experiences into those we like and those we don't, often calling these 'good' experiences or 'bad' experiences. These experiences are innocuous in and of themselves; it is the perspective we take from our map of the world that determines our emotional reaction to each. Even more, it is the belief and then the 'story' we are creating in our world that generates the reality we create. What if you perceived each situation as information, and not 'good or bad'?

The Taoist masters teach us to look deeper. In the flow of yin and yang, everything is constantly changing into its opposite. The more we live with awareness of the inevitable tides of the Tao, the more it seems superficial and misguided to reject some experiences and try to hold onto others. It is better to accept the wholeness of life.

A traditional Taoist story illustrates these teachings. When an old farmer's stallion wins a prize at a country show, his neighbor calls round to congratulate him, but the old farmer says, "Who knows what is good and what is bad?" The next day, some thieves come and steal his valuable animal. His neighbor comes to commiserate with him, but the old man replies, "Who knows what is good and what is bad?" A few days later the spirited stallion escapes from the thieves and joins a herd of wild mares, leading them back to the farm. The neighbor calls to share the farmer's joy, but the farmer says, "Who knows what is good and what is bad?" The following day, while trying to break in one of the wild mares, the farmer's son is thrown and fractures his leg. The neighbor calls to share the farmer's sorrow, but the old man's attitude remains the same as before. The following week the army passes by, forcibly conscripting soldiers for a war, but they do not take the farmer's son because he cannot walk. The neighbor thinks to himself, "Who knows what is good and what is bad?" and realizes that the old farmer must be a Taoist sage.

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***Read more about the magic of beliefs in the [next article!](#)***