

## **Still praying for the American dream? Here's a wake-up call to stop the nightmares**

By Olga Sheean

Once upon a time there was a great nation. It led the world in democracy, innovation and apple pie. It preached decency, family values and personal freedom. It helped smaller nations, promoted free enterprise and encouraged individuals to be the best they could be. It was loved; it was respected; it was admired. Its name was America.

How do you begin to revitalize a nation that's been brought to its knees? How do you change a collective mindset cemented by centuries of dysfunction? You look at the symptoms, find the underlying cause and correct the problem at source. And, ideally, you have a powerful, honest man at the top to lead the way. Debt, divorce, depression, abuse, addiction, obesity, poverty and war are the glaring symptoms of a race that has failed to fully understand or empower itself. And if we are disempowered as individuals, driven largely by fear, need and despair, how can our nation be anything but dysfunctional?

With the election of Mr Obama, Americans have a wonderful opportunity to say goodbye to dysfunction and fear-mongering—in government *and* in their personal lives. More than just a politician, Mr Obama has shown himself to be an exceptional human being who embodies the wisdom, integrity, charisma and authenticity so lacking in American politics and life. He's a glaring reminder of just how far America has strayed from what is right and good; he's a man who believes in himself and in his ability to do something extraordinary; and he's a symbol of hope and optimism in a disempowered nation.

### **It's an inside job**

Most Americans have been disempowered since birth. They've been programmed to think of the world as a competitive place. They've been taught that they're at the mercy of circumstances, that there's no free lunch, that life is a lottery, and that they're not worthy, acceptable, lovable or beautiful enough to create what they want. We've ALL been programmed that way. We're not taught that we're powerful human beings; we're

not taught self-mastery; and we're certainly not taught that the true source of our problems *and* our power is in our subconscious minds. Instead, we're taught to fear, fight, litigate, go to war, and exploit others' weaknesses in order to get what we want because, deep down, we don't believe ourselves to be worthy.

The fears, insecurities and negative beliefs passed on to us by parents and society make us victims in a seemingly random world, oblivious to our power. This negative programming robs us of our self-worth, thwarts our potential, distorts our sense of self and crushes our dreams. Most importantly, it *determines* our circumstances. Only when we understand how our programming causes us to attract the outward manifestations of our fears and low self-worth can we take control of our lives. Only then do we realize that *we* are the real originators of the scenarios, dynamics and drama that we call life.

### **The programming conundrum**

While it may be hard to believe that your programming could possibly determine your circumstances, it could be the most liberating piece of news you've heard this decade. When we understand the power and purpose of our subconscious programming, we can break free of struggle, hardship and self-defeat. We can get our lives—and our nation—powerfully back on track. The problem is not out there in the shaky stock exchange or in the rising price of oil; these are just the symptoms of our dysfunction, not the cause. The problem *and* the solution lie deep within each one of us. When we realize that our programming determines how much love, money, ease, success and fulfilment we have, we can start to take charge of our lives.

Taking responsibility for our lives means taking responsibility for our bodies *and* our minds—where all the action is. We need to learn how our bodies work and understand what they're trying to tell us when we get sick; we need to delve more deeply into our minds to cultivate the discipline and determination required for healing; and, most importantly, we need to identify and transform the negative subconscious programming that has been running—and ruining—our lives. But transforming our negative programming is not about having good intentions or thinking positively. It's about

*demonstrating* whatever qualities we failed to have nourished in us as children—qualities such as acceptance, respect, validation and trust. When we take actions that demonstrate strong self-worth, we change our negative programming and, consequently, our negative circumstances. No one can prove this to you, and most people will dismiss the idea as absurd; but you can prove it to yourself and, if you do, you'll be laughing all the way to the bank.

### **Who's in charge of *your* dream?**

America's current crisis shows us how far we are from living the *real* 'American dream'—a life of harmony, financial prosperity, loving relationships and professional success. Making that dream a reality requires an individual commitment to greater self-awareness and self-responsibility. If every individual took responsibility for their fears, beliefs and actions, rather than being driven by collective insecurity and hopelessness, America could truly become the super-power it has always claimed to be. Health-care systems are failing to meet our needs because we are *meant* to be masters of our own bodies, not dependent upon outside expertise. Our deteriorating environment is a reflection of our internal neglect, with the dumping of our toxic emotions every bit as damaging and prevalent as the dumping of toxic wastes. We are meant to take charge of our own lives, our own bodies and our fragile environment—not just take a pill, defer the responsibility or hide out in hopelessness.

Americans may like to think in terms of democracy and freedom, yet most live in fear of attack from other nations and/or from people in their own neighbourhood; and they fear not being acceptable to their partner, boss or others. Fear is the direct result of negative programming and it fosters dysfunction. Look at the average relationship and you'll see degrees of control, co-dependence, emotional or physical abuse, manipulation, resentment and blame. You may despair of ever having the love or life that you want, but every challenge you face is designed to trigger your negative programming and show you what's missing inside. When you take practical steps to fill in the qualities you've been missing in your relationships (such as acceptance, respect and trust), you will start to

attract those very same qualities in your life. Relationships are where we get to practise being human and fully empowered. They are the key to us becoming whole and fulfilled.

### **Micro/macro healing**

Healing within and between nations requires healing at the personal level. Everything around us changes when we change ourselves. If we cultivate strong self-worth, while practising self-respect, personal responsibility and integrity in our relationships, we will begin to experience these values in our relationships, our community and our world. Once we recognize dysfunction in our own words or actions, we can recognize it in others and take steps to change things. Becoming empowered in our own lives is the key to building a truly empowered nation.

The basic principle of personal empowerment underpins everything we do, whether we realize it or not: we attract whatever circumstances we need to come face to face with ourselves so that we can figure out who we really are. Whether we attracted President Bush or the girl next door, it's all the same thing. Others show us who we subconsciously think we are; they reflect back to us the dysfunction created by our negative programming; and they challenge us to be human, in a world where everything tends to disconnect us from our hearts and our ability to make a difference. The bombardment of e-mails, the distractions of cell phones, the mind-numbing commute to and from work, the lure of technology, the pain of abusive relationships, the hype and drama of the media, and the frantic pace of everyday living—all keep us stuck in survival mode. In the midst of all that, can you even begin to care if street children are gunned down in Guatemala, if thousands are made homeless by floods in Asia, or if your 80-year-old neighbour sits alone in the dark after losing his wife of 50 years?

President Bush showed us what was wrong with our world—inside and out. Mr Obama represents the positive end of the spectrum, demonstrating the greater power of human decency, integrity and strong self-worth. We count on him to lead with wisdom and awareness, but he can only do so effectively if Americans become leaders in their own lives too. When we take responsibility for our relationships, our dysfunction and our

fears, we can generate the success and fulfilment we desire. Empowerment happens one mindful, responsible step at a time. It's not just about who we elect; it's about who we elect to be.

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