



OLGA ALEXANDRU

WHY MANIFESTATION MAY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD

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As spirituality, self-care and wellbeing continue to enter the mainstream, people are looking towards them for answers on how to improve their circumstances. They are consulting tarot and oracle cards, attending sound healing classes and meditating regularly all with the aim of bettering their lives. As a result, people are coming across esoteric concepts that they might not have been exposed to even ten years ago.

The Law of Attraction, one of the twelve alleged universal laws that govern our world, in its simplest form states that whatever energy you put out into the universe will come back to you. According to proponents of this law, everything has energy and positive thoughts have a higher vibration than negative. So, if you think positive thoughts, positivity will flow back to you.. Oppositely, if you have negative thoughts, you are asking for the universe to give you more negativity. Manifestation is the Law of Attraction in action. It is harnessing that law to attract the things you want into your life.

So how exactly does one manifest a new car or a raise? One has to think about what they want, ask the universe for it and then let go of any attachment to the outcome, all the while maintaining only positive thoughts. Or they can attend a course with a manifestation expert who, for a price, will show them how to do it. These experts are all over social media. They post testimonials from people who have previously attended their course and manifested thousands of dollars or a new house. They offer their followers chances to manifest their dreams by commenting below their post with a number, an emoji or a 'yes'. They show people activities to do to raise their vibrations.

While manifestation has taken social media by storm in the last few years, it's not a new concept. It's current popularity and resurgence can be traced back to Rhonda Byrne's book *The Secret* which was published in 2006 and became an international sensation. But its roots go back much further. A love child between Christian Prosperity Gospel, a belief that God wants his followers to be wealthy and that you can gain more wealth through positive thinking, and 19th Century New Thought spirituality, which among other things believes that your thoughts create your reality, the law of attraction and, its practical application, manifestation were born.

The dangers of believing these ideas are manifold. It blames the individual if they are unsuccessful in life. Maybe they didn't want it bad enough. Maybe they were too negative. If only they'd tried harder. Or maybe they tried too hard and didn't let go of their attachment to the outcome. It blames them for not being positive or high-vibe enough. This so-called universal law doesn't take into account historic oppression or structural inequalities which can and do limit the opportunities that someone has available to them. It makes no allowances for real world circumstances, instead claiming that there is a level playing field for all and therefore anyone can manifest what they want.

Another problem with manifestation lies in the misappropriation of the Buddhist concept of non-attachment. For people trying to manifest, the reason they have to let go of attachment to the result is never explained; it's just what they are told to do. There is no acknowledgement or awareness of where this foundational idea comes from. In Buddhism non-attachment is a way of being, not a destination so when people practice

non-attachment for the purpose of manifestation this is the exact opposite of its intended purpose. It was never about individual gains but instead about collective consciousness.

Online spirituality influencers who regurgitate the same talking points of positive thought and high vibrations being enough to change one's circumstances are at best misguided and at worst purposely deceitful. They target vulnerable people who are desperate for their lives to change. By offering workshops and courses with high price tags, they are tricking people into paying for something that has no evidence, beyond anecdotal, of working.

It also sets a dangerous precedent by putting all of the focus on positive thinking which can lead to toxic positivity. It can make people scared to deal with negative emotions, thoughts and feelings, which are a normal part of life, in case this lowers their vibration and causes them to attract negativity into their life. This can lead to anxiety and a hyperfixation on having the 'right' type of thoughts.

We can't blame the individuals looking for a way out of the uncertainty of the present moment. But we can and should hold influencers accountable for what they are peddling. After all, if positive thinking was enough to change our circumstances surely we wouldn't need courses on how to do it.

AUTHOR BIO



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Olga Alexandru is a Romanian-Canadian writer currently living in the UK. She has written stories for Insider, Toronto Star and Yahoo among others. She is also a poet and zine maker with her writing focusing on feminist issues, mental health and wellbeing.

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