THE ERNEST BECKER FOUNDATION PRESENTS

READY

THE LITTLEST HARBINGER OF DEATH!

GRIMLY REMINDING PEOPLE OF THEIR RAPIDLY APPROACHING DOOM SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME!

IT'S BECKER-RIFFIC!
Hey there, kids! I’m ReapY, the Littlest Reaper, and I’m here to take you on an informative, albeit morbid, journey into the world of Ernest Becker. It’s going to be loads of fun, as long as we don’t die before it’s over. I’m just saying; these things happen...

What’s that? Who’s Ernest Becker? Well, I’m glad you asked. Read on, fragile mortals!

The big deal about Ernest Becker is that he looked at mankind with an interdisciplinary eye. That’s important! You see, where other people looked at the world from only one point of view, Becker studied everything! Anthropology, psychology, theology, philosophy, the arts and history. Without that, it’s like making a pizza out of nothing but crust. Bleeeech!

Let’s go a little deeper...

Here’s the man himself, Ernest Becker! We will be exploring some of his theories on why we do what we do and why we sometimes act like big, stupid jerks!

Now, a lot of these theories can be found in greater detail in his groundbreaking book, The Denial of Death, and in a DVD based on his theories called Flight From Death.
Here's four themes found in Becker's philosophy on why we commit evil acts, or in other words, why we sometimes act like big, fat jerks and screw up the world even more than it already is!

1. The world is terrifying! (duh!)

2. The basic motivation for human behavior is the need to deny our fear of death. (that's me!)

Wait... it gets better!

3. In order to deny death, (a) each person creates a character that is a defense against despair, and (b) each society provides a hero system that allows the individual to believe that he or she may transcend death by making a lasting contribution to life.

4. Our heroic projects aimed at destroying evil have the paradoxical effect of bringing more evil into the world.

Cheerful stuff, eh?
TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT LIKE ANY ANIMAL, WE ARE EQUIPPED WITH A BUILT-IN DEFENSE SYSTEM. AND A BUNCH OF BRAINIACS EVENTUALLY ENDED UP CALLING IT "FIGHT OR FLIGHT", AND IT KIND OF WORKS LIKE THIS; WHENEVER WE FEEL THREATENED, WE DO ONE OF TWO THINGS...

**FIGHT**

**YER CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN', BUSTER!**

**PUT 'EM UP! PUT 'EM UP!**

**OR FLIGHT**

**GOTTA GO, JOE!**

NOW WE CAN LOOK AT A SERIES OF EXPERIMENTS, WHERE PEOPLE TOOK A SURVEY AND THEN WERE ASKED TO COMPLETE A SIMPLE TASK. BUT NOT EVERYONE GOT THE SAME SURVEY! HERE WE ARE INTRODUCED TO "DEATH REMINDERS"...

**GROUP A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO YOU LIKE APPLES?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROUP B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO YOU LIKE APPLES? (OH, BY THE WAY, YOU'RE GONNA DIE.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROUP A TOOK A NORMAL SURVEY; GROUP B RECEIVED SUBTLE "DEATH REMINDERS" AND THEIR REACTIONS TO THE FOLLOWING TASKS WERE SURPRISING! LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT A FEW...**
The first experiment involves a couple of judges and a... um... "lady of negotiable affections" (that means hooker!)

Hiya, sailors!

The judges all took a survey, again; Group A taking the normal survey and Group B receiving the "death reminders". Then they were asked to set the bail amount for a common crime, solicitation (that means being a hooker). Group A set the bail at the usual amount, but Group B, after being induced to feel threatened, set the amounts much higher! Why? The lady of the night didn't remind him of his impending doom, but she got punished for it anyway.

Oh, golly, let's say... hmmm... $25.

Why, this is an outrage! Fine set at one gazillion dollars!

Group A

Group B
In the next experiment, after taking the surveys, both groups were assigned the task of sifting dirt out of an ink-filled glass of water but were given nothing but an American flag. The only way to succeed in the task was to use the flag as a filter, thus making it a dirty inky mess, and this played on peoples’ sense of patriotism and symbolism. The reactions were greatly varied, as you can see...

Ah, yes! This will do quite nicely!

I can’t use this! It’s a sacred symbol of our beloved country! *sob!*

Group A

Group B
The next experiment goes further than patriotism and tackles religion! After each group took their survey (group B receiving their death reminders, of course) each group naturally reacted to the simple task of nailing nails into a wall (with no hammer nearby, but a handy crucifix) with widely different results.

Group A approached the task like it was just another day of minor home repairs, but you can imagine that group B may have worried about who may be up there, watching them. Nothing like a death reminder to bring you closer to God, eh?

Group A

No hammer? No problem! Thank God I have this weird cross-shaped thing!

Group B

I must hammer this nail and all I have is this symbol of the Lord! Is it worth an eternal doom in hell?!
Moving on, we come to the final experiment...

This one is a hoot, because it’s like a practical joke. We all like those, don’t we? Well, depends which end you’re on!

This one involved people pouring the amount of hot sauce that they would make a friend drink as a gag (or to make them gag). As you can imagine, group A was a lot nicer than group B after they received their death reminders!

Now would be a great time for some personal introspection. Think about it for a second, how much hot sauce would you pour for a laugh? What if you felt threatened? What if you were feeling attacked? Hmmmm...
Anyway, getting back to our experiment, I'm guessing that by now you've got a pretty good feel for how things turned out! The moral of the story is a basis for Ernest Becker's theories. When you are reminded of just how mortal you are, the way you would normally handle a simple task is altered. You'll want to teach harsher lessons, like how the group B judges handled things, or you may cling to something larger, like patriotism or sudden attacks of religious fervor, and you may even want a simple prank to make a lasting impression... on your friend's scorched and burning tongue.

Aw, jeepers! One good drop should put some pep in his step! Hyuk! Hyuk!

More! I need more! Mua-ha-hahaha-ha-ha-haaaaa!!!

Thy enemies shall feel the scorching of a thousand hells! Burn, baby! Burn!!!

Burn!!!

Jeeze! That guy needs to chill!

Anyway, let's take this little chat one step further before it's all said and done...
So ask yourself, “When I feel threatened, when I’m feeling attacked, when I’m reminded, however slightly, that I am mortal and my life, above everything else it will be, will mostly be brief, how will I react?” Look at the everyday situations below. What would your knee-jerk reaction be? Would you lash back? Will you spread the evil? Now, be honest!

Millenium hand and shrimp!

Gimme a dollar! Nargle flarb!

I gotta say, your wife's gotta great rack!

Stand up straight! You look like a slob!

'Sup, dude...

Why can’t you be more like your brother?

So, yer daughter home?

Now imagine how you could react!
Now it’s your chance to tell your story!

We want to see your own comics based on Ernest Becker’s theories!

All you have to do is think about a moment in your life when you’ve felt threatened or attacked, and for some reason you acted like a big crazy wacko!

That’s a stupid hat.

Oh yeah?! We’ll your face smells like poop!

Then you can think about it and draw a comic about how you could have handled it in a thoughtful, less knee-jerk kind of way...

That’s a stupid hat.

It’s my new look! It’ll grow on ya!

Yay! We’re friends!
WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU AND SEEING YOUR COMICS! DON'T BE AFRAID, TELL YOUR STORY! WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE AND WE'LL ALL BE THERE AGAIN, BUT THE CLOSER WE LOOK AT OURSELVES AND THE MORE HONEST WE CAN BE, THEN THE BETTER WE WILL UNDERSTAND OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER.

THANKS FOR READING AND GOOD LUCK OUT THERE!

THE END!