

## Feel free to read this!

By Tullio Orlando - Spring 2016

Each of us has their own definition of what it means to be free.

Our meanings take on various shapes and notions from forming ideas without restraint, embrace or form opinions we adopt as our own. Freedom is an experience to be able to do, say, be, with whomever and wherever. Closely affiliated with these is freedom of speech - the liberty of voicing personal perspectives and having our voice truly heard and respected. We are free when we are able to own ourselves and the choices we make.

Freedom is exceptionally valuable. We rejoice in the notion of freedom by teaching, advocating, and hoping it for others. People want it, demand it; others die for it. Some, never come to know what it feels like because they have never been truly free, or freedom was taken away.

What does freedom *look* like? Is it more tangible than conceptual? Is it more about choices than the imposition of decisions? It's all of these and more. But first, we need to distinguish between what it means to be free from and be free to do something. Freedom *to* and freedom *from* are the sides of the same coin, and can help in understanding our personal development and journey.

External interference prevent us from doing what we want, when we want to do it. Let's call this 'negative freedom.' These restrictions are placed on us by other people. Therefore it stands to reason the more negative freedom you have, the fewer obstacles existing between us and doing whatever we desire. Another name for this is 'opportunity' because we have access to a broad range of prospects regardless of whether we decide to take advantage of these or not.

On the other side of the coin, we have 'positive freedom' to control and direct one's own life. It allows us to consciously make our own choices, create purpose, and shape our lives instead of having it all decided for us. This is also known as the 'exercise concept' of freedom because it encompasses choosing from a selection of opportunities and then acting upon what is most aligned with what we are really seeking out of life.

Is the difference between negative and positive freedom still blurry? On the one hand, we can think of liberty as the absence of external obstacles. We are free if no one is stopping us from doing whatever we might want to do. To be truly free, you must be self-determined, which is to say you must be able to control your own destiny and in your own interests. Liberty is as simple as the number of doors open to us. Ultimately, freedom is choosing our own way and attitude in any given set of circumstances.

Which freedom do we practice and advocate at Montage?