

## Accepting what is

Those of you, who, like me, run your own business, will probably be familiar with the sometimes unpredictable nature of one's work routine and income. Somehow, even the best of plans can suddenly go seriously astray, seemingly without warning.

Personally, I know I'm veering off course and not coping with it when I start to plan My Big Escape! My Big Escape fantasy involves packing a small suitcase with just enough possessions to survive for the rest of my life (monk/nun style) and walking out of the house and into the sunset, thumbing a lift as I go! No responsibilities, no worries and hardly any baggage, Samsonite or otherwise!

Since making this enlightening discovery, I've decided to catch myself at the point in the internal movie where I'm choosing the contents of my suitcase, rather than waiting until that beautiful sunset beckons. Running away from our predicaments doesn't work. It simply buries the painful feelings deeply inside, only to emerge later as anger, resentment or even illness.

Acceptance is the first step to handling these difficult situations. It is about fully embracing life as it is; disagreements, computer breakdowns, illness, accidents, delays, disappointments and all. This might sound like resignation or apathy, but actually there is a fundamental difference. Acceptance simply means refusing to be consumed by how we would like things to be and instead actively engaging with the reality that confronts us. Once we have accepted a situation, then, yes we may find that some things are unacceptable and need to be changed. Then we take action. This is the difference between apathy and acceptance. Someone experiencing apathy will not take action, whereas someone who is accepting of the situation will recognise the need to change and will act upon it.

From a rational perspective, it is the way we manage our expectations that can get us into trouble. Non-acceptance means there is a gap between the demands or rigid expectations of our minds and the reality of what is. This is what causes us pain and what drains our energy.

In a spiritual sense, acceptance means not judging events as "good" or "bad". What is important is how we respond to those events rather than how we judge them. Eckhart Tolle, in his book "The Power of Now", calls this response to events "Positive Action" which he says is about "Accepting that you are stuck in the mud without deceiving yourself that it's ok to be stuck in the mud. Then take action to get yourself out. This is then positive action – much more effective than that which arises out of anger, despair, or frustration."

It is pointless to judge events as being "good" or "bad" when either may have positive or negative consequences. A "bad event" can result in a challenge for us from which we learn something. A "good event" brings joy, but then sadness because it passes away.

In spiritual terms, acceptance is often referred to as “surrender”, where surrender means giving up our attachment to the outcome of a situation or event. This can be particularly challenging when we encounter change.

It’s a fact of life - change is inevitable, and accepting that fact frees us to surrender to life’s ups and downs. Welcoming change helps us to grow as it encourages us to step outside our comfort zones. Losing something potentially makes room for something better. So, acceptance is perfectly compatible with taking action, initiating change or achieving goals.

In a state of acceptance, we gain access to a more positive sort of energy that flows like a surge of life force into our actions.

Perhaps I’ll just put that suitcase back up in the loft...

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