

## Mindfulness Practice

Within mindfulness practice we try to cultivate attitudes that will be helpful in our lives, one of those attitudes is acceptance. Although it is no harder or easier than any of the other attitudes, it can be more difficult to understand.

Acceptance does not mean resignation or giving up, it does not mean you have to like everything or that you have to be passive or abandon your principles. It does not mean you have to be satisfied with everything or that you have to tolerate injustice.

Firstly acceptance means seeing events as they really are and accepting them exactly as they are, without resistance to them.

Secondly it means accepting the thoughts, feelings and emotions that the event has triggered within your mind and body, in other words, accepting yourself as you are, without resistance.

Accepting yourself the way you are is an act of self-compassion and wisdom, by cultivating acceptance you are creating the pre-conditions for healing. Both aspects require practice but the second aspect also requires a high level of awareness, this also requires practice. There is a world of difference between actions and decisions that arise from wise acceptance and those that spring from our judging, grasping or resisting mind. This attitude sets the stage for responding appropriately in your life, no matter what is happening.

Think about Nelson Mandela for a moment, think about the imprisonment, the suffering, the loneliness, discomfort and oppression he suffered. By accepting, rather than denying or angrily reacting to his suffering, he remained mindful to his intention to benefit others and freed himself to work without bitterness or self-pity for freedom and justice. What sort of leader would he have made had he not chosen to accept his imprisonment and suffering?

Acceptance could be defined as 'Coming to terms with', often only achieved after we have gone through a period of emotional denial and anger, and is a natural progression of coming to terms with, in fact it is part of the healing process. However putting aside major life calamities which can take a great deal of time to heal from, in the course of our daily lives we waste a great deal of time and energy in denying or resisting what is already fact. When we do that we are basically trying to force situations to be the way we would like them to be with our mind, which only creates more tension and prevents any positive change from occurring, plus it is exhausting. We're on a diet and we've just eaten another chocolate bar, we've had another drink, another cigarette, spoken to somebody without care. We might, feel guilty, depressed, anxious, angry, disappointed in ourselves . . . so much so, we have another drink, another chocolate bar, take out our frustration on somebody else, born out of our reactivity to the situation. We can't punish ourselves into being a better person, guilt will not stop us from repeating these behaviours, anger can only make things worse. Only with acceptance, along with other attitudes of love, kindness and compassion for ourselves, can we be free from the imprisonment of our habits.

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