



ACCEPTANCE

There is a freedom, a flow in Accepting what is occurring. To stop wasting energy fighting whatever IS.

I used to live my life angry and restrained. My body, mind and spirit were on fire and agitated. I am a runner and running was my saving grace for many years. Running off and away from the tension. The angrier I was, the faster I could run. Work, school, home maintenance were all completed in an orderly and timely fashion. Rarely was there a responsibility that wasn't accomplished well. But ask me how I was feeling or how my body was doing or how life was going and my answer would invariably be "fine."

Until I started learning about and incorporating Mindfulness practice into my life, I wasn't able to take a step back and observe myself very well. When Mindfulness was initially introduced, I remember the trainer described eating an orange as an opportunity to be mindful: "slice open the orange slowly. Smell the effervescence of the orange. Slowly chew each bite savoring the sensation and flavor." Pretty sure I rolled my eyes at least a couple of times. The training was about working with individuals with a high level of trauma. I was a newly licensed mental health therapist and very judgmental. How is eating an orange going to help anyone who is currently suffering with PTSD?

Fast forward a decade and I now understand that mindful engagement in our lives is the way we all foster a life well lived. We may support ourselves to become mindful in a variety of ways, but the result is consistently the same: greater acceptance of self and an increase in our ability to move through life with less overwhelm and stress. Living life with a decrease in reactivity and an increase in responsiveness. Mindfulness supports awareness. Without awareness, we cannot accept what is occurring.

What does Acceptance change?

Accepting what is happening within and around us gives us permission to stop resisting. The more we resist something, the more tension we create around it and the more challenging it becomes. Remember the old analogy about an intoxicated person versus a sober person involved in a car accident? The person intoxicated is usually less injured because their body does not tense in anticipation of the crash. Flowing with life as it happens creates less resistance and preserves energy and opportunity for greatness.

When we are tuned in to the present moment and responding to what is in front of us, we magically become more productive and joyful. I call it Peaceful Productivity. It doesn't look or feel the same as accomplishing a "to do" list but what is most important is generally accomplished and life feels much more relaxed. So, acceptance changes the way we feel about the life we are living right in front of us. Changing the way we *feel* ensures that we adjust the way we're engaging naturally, without force or "pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps" effort. Positive change does not have to be hard or forceful. But, it does serve to be intentional and conscious.

Fostering Acceptance

There are a few tricks we may use to foster Acceptance quickly. One of my favorites is to give verbal permission to whatever is occurring. Basically, say out loud some statement that affirms and accepts what is going on in or around us. Some of my favorites are:

- So, what. Now what?
- Okay. And?
- Well, isn't this an adventure?

Acceptance naturally moves us into problem solving. It prevents us from remaining stuck in unproductive patterns, environments or relationships. An internal dialogue using these examples of verbal permission to support Acceptance may flow something like this:

- A racoon knocks over your trash cans early one morning. When you already have a full agenda and little time to spare, especially for trash pick up... *So what. Now what?* I could leave it. Then it will get blown around the hard and make a bigger mess for later. I could just pick it up. I could ask someone else to pick it up, if available.
- Partner does that thing that just gets under your skin. Again... *Okay.* I cannot change that my partner consistently disrespects _____. *And?* I've communicated about it as much as I feel is productive. In fact, we fight every time I bring it up. *And?* This behavior still bothers me. *And?* But not enough to leave them over. *And?* This is something I could avoid dealing with by _____.
- Kiddos go ALL THE WAY LEFT. *Well, isn't this an adventure?* Sit back and watch. Accept what's happening curiously, observing their behavior and interactions without a word. Kids stop whatever they're doing and look at you and wonder why you're not getting in the mix. Now you may easily address whatever is happening without participating in their chaos but inviting them to join your calm.

Feeling stuck is one of the primary reasons people have engaged with me professionally over the years. Stuck in a mood, relationship, life pattern, stuck. Acceptance supports movement right from the start. It sounds counter intuitive but acceptance of whatever is happening also supports a release of attachment as well. When we release attachment to what is occurring, we are better able to evaluate with curiosity rather than judgement. And curiosity is a space ripe for productive problem solving. The more swiftly we're able to move through the challenges of our lives, the easier life will feel and the more energy we have to invest in what we truly enjoy.

But you have the power. And acceptance of whatever IS will root you firmly in your own power. With acceptance we release shame and judgement about what is occurring in our lives and understand that we are choosing our reality. To stay where we are or to move on. Either way, we are not stuck. This life is our choice and engaging in acceptance is a regular reminder that we are in control of everything we actually can – ourselves.

Acceptance Releases Stuckness