

Not Here; Not There

It's often the case in our lives – at work, at home, in relationship, and in other life areas (e.g., finances, health, personal environment, professional growth and the like) that in our effort to be somewhere, we also have to experience a place that is "in-between."

One of the most difficult experiences in life, at least in my experience, is giving up what "was," the familiar, and being able to be alone while waiting for the next (fill in the blank...companion, job, cure, living space...) to appear. Very challenging.

Emotions

The same also applies to our emotions. If, historically, we've been the angry one, the resentful one, the frustrated one, the victimized one, the hurt one, the jealous one (again, fill in the blank with your historical, characteristic emotion), we're most likely very comfortable with that emotion – even though it may be self-sabotaging, self-limiting or self-defeating. We have identified with it. The thought of letting go of the emotion is akin to taking an emotional bungee jump – left out in space without the identity of "I am ____." In this place, we are not here (the state of the old emotion), or there (the state of the new emotion).

Relationships

We know that in order to experience a new (healthier) relationship, we need to let go of the old relationship. Again, not fun! That in-between place is very uncomfortable, very disconcerting. We can feel lost, directionless and alone – a place that we may tend to fill with self-loathing, self-abuse, or self-pity. It's an empty place.

Other life areas

The same state of unsteadiness, groundlessness, shakiness, aloneness, confusion or fear arises when we are between careers, jobs, homes, or states of health – mental, physical, psychological or spiritual. Or, between behaviors. If, previously, we were standoffish, controlling, overbearing, bullying, passive, deferential, and the like, or a liar, cheater, or deceptive – all behaviors that served us well in some way – our concern is "What will I be like if I change?"

In that in-between place, we may experience fear, anxiety, terror, guilt, loss, sorrow, anger or grief – between giving up what used to bring us a

(false) sense of comfort, safety, control or security, and anticipating what's next.

The point?

What you're experiencing in this in-between place is absolutely normal. It's part of the human condition that comes with true and real change. The way through is to allow the feelings, the emotions. Observe them, without judgment and without making up stories about them. Just observe. Then release them. Give them permission to dissolve, to melt.

True, real and lasting change – mentally, emotionally, physically psychologically and spiritually - brings discomfort. This is what I refer to as "necessary suffering." And necessary suffering passes - maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, next month or maybe next year. It's what fills the "in-between" space. But know, it passes. It's not fun; but it's a necessary requisite for true growth and maturation. It's the bridge that prepares and supports us to cross over to "there."

Questions for self-reflection:

What negative emotions do you experience on a regular basis?

What emotions lie on the "other side?"

Where in your life are you currently experiencing being "in-between?"

Is being "in-between OK?" If not, why not?

Have you been in an "in-between" place before? In retrospect, was it worth it? What did you learn/see/discover about yourself as a result?

Does "not knowing" cause you discomfort? Why?

Have you survived "not knowing" in the past? How so?

What was your experience of being "in between" like growing up?

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