

## **The Microwave is too slow!" - a question of patience**

*"There are two cardinal sins from which all others spring: Impatience and Laziness." - Franz Kafka*

The other day I was speaking with a neighbor a single, 50-something woman who's a high-level executive for a Fortune 50 company. She was coming home from work, carrying some packages. At the end of our conversation I said, "Enjoy your evening." She replied, "Oh, I will. I have some delicious take-out." Taking a step, and perhaps feeling guilty, perhaps feeling she needed to add some context, she stopped and added, "I have some good stuff in the fridge but these days the microwave just takes too long."

### **Impatience**

If you Google "impatience," you'll come up with about 8,970,000. It's a familiar topic these days. So, let's consider some aspects of living life from a place of impatience, and patience.

If we sit back and observe how we live life from a place of impatience, here are some ways impatience shows up in our life:

At work:

- Being short or rude with co-workers and colleagues, or clients, customers and other stakeholders, cutting them off, interrupting them, and verbally and emotionally pushing them away;
- Incorrectly taking information such as a phone number, email address, or other data-entry bits;
- Making faulty decisions when it comes to strategic planning, new business or new product development, or hiring;
- Jamming the copier or fax machine;
- Spilling food or drink or making other messes;
- Completing tasks and projects that then require re-work and additional resources;
- Giving up too quickly on tasks that require deep focus and concentration, leading to less than optimal or disappointing results;
- Cutting corners, being unethical, and not acting with integrity;
- Experiencing stress, burnout, rustout and dis-ease;
- Needing to control;

At home:

- Treating our spouse/partner, children, parents with disrespect as "we don't have time for them";
- Overcooking or undercooking meals we prepare;
- Making accounting and banking errors;
- Carelessly completing inside/outside work and repairs;
- Engaging in love-making and intimate moments that are rushed, impersonal and meaning-less;
- Being rude and insensitive towards retail and service personnel in person and on the phone;
- Having fender-benders more often due to driving too fast and too close;
- Going through the motions of an exercise routine or spiritual practice without a conscious focus and awareness;
- Inappropriate shouting, escalating tension or unhealthy silence;

At play:

- Being argumentative and defensive when things don't go "my way";
- Experiencing sports and exercise injuries or accidents over and over again;
- Losing out on the "joy" and "fun" of sports and exercise;

- Being hasty and inconsiderate of colleagues or teammates;
- Cheating;

The downside of impatience is that we often need to spend inordinate amounts of time and energy repairing, re-working and re-doing what we did when we were impatient.

### **The bane of patience? we're in a hurry**

We live in a culture of "hurry up." Fast-food, drive-throughs, immediacy, getting here and getting there almost as if any delay spells d-e-a-t-h. Not unlike the shark that needs to keep moving to get oxygen into its lungs. The question underneath the question is, "Why am I so in a hurry to get to the next thing?" Why does it seem like so many folks' idea of the "short-term" is tonight, and the "long-term is next Friday night?" What's the rush?

### **The loss of joy**

The obsessive need for people to "be somewhere else", has created a joy-less life for many - joyless in the sense they cannot find any deep meaning in where they are in the moment. Joy must be "over there" and so their obsession to "finishing this to get to that" creates a life that is akin to living in a void bereft of pleasure, joy and happiness. And in that place, devoid of happiness, pleasure and meaning, they cannot settle, breathe or be at peace.

When we lack joy, we suffocate. And in our state of suffocation, we grasp on to anything, anyone who might be a source of oxygen i.e., pleasure, joy and happiness. But, alas, it never works we've become too conditioned to being impatient, resulting in a "fast food" approach to life that keeps us from being in the moment and from seeing there really is joy, meaning, and happiness where I am right here and right now. So, we move, continuously - agitated, irritated, seeking the unattainable - until we learn to be patient and peaceful right where we are.

In a state of impatience, we race through life and in the process lose our capacity to experience true and real happiness, joy, fun, and appreciation for where we are in the moment. The opposite is true. Impatience leads to states of frustration, anger and fear like living in a consistent state of frenzy.

### **The antidote to impatience? You guessed it patience.**

*"Infinite patience brings immediate results."* Wayne Dyer

So, here are some tips that can support you to experience patience:

- Be aware of your feeling of impatience. Sense where and how impatience shows up in your body. Allow your impatience. Don't fight it. Don't judge it. Don't tell yourself a story about it. Just allow it to be.
- Breathe deeply into your belly. Feel your feet on the floor and, if sitting, feel your butt in your chair. Allow the floor to support you; allow your chair to support you. Breathe deeply.
- As you breathe deeply, send your breath to any areas of discomfort in your body. Don't make any effort to "fix" anything or make anything happen. Just send the breath to the areas of discomfort.
- Welcome the breath and invite it to go to those uncomfortable places. Notice your experience and as you do, time will begin to expand a little, then a little more, and a little more. As you watch, witness and observe your self in this experience, the discomfort, the agitation the impatience itself will begin to dissipate. Then, notice what comes in to replace the impatience. It might feel like an inner peace, or quiet, or relaxation, or softness in the once-tense areas of your body. Stay with your experience and see what arises. As your feeling of impatience subsides, you'll find an

opportunity to experience an inner OK-ness, right here and right now, in this moment. And in this moment, there's no need to be "somewhere else." Patience has arisen in this moment.

Impatience is an ego-mind quality. The mind always needs to be "somewhere else." Patience is a heart/soul quality. The heart/soul is just fine, right here, right now.

Patience brings focus, clarity and discernment the capacity to be in the moment and gain clarity in terms of "right knowing", "right understanding" and "right action." That is, we are in a state of responsiveness, not reactivity.

Patience allows us to experience the moment, no matter where we are or whom we're with without the urgency to be "somewhere else." In this state, we are practicing presence or mindfulness - the antidote to impatience focused on the moment during a meeting, speaking with a co-worker, standing in line at the supermarket, hitting a golf ball, eating a burger or peeling a carrot. Again, no need to be in the future, no need to be somewhere else.

Even when using the microwave.

**So, some questions for self-reflection are:**

- What does patience mean to you? Has patience taken on a pejorative, negative, connotation? How did you come to view patience as a vice rather than a virtue?
- Write ten words or phrases you associate with patience. What do you see about yourself as a result of doing this exercise?
- When you hear the phrase, "Be patient," how do you feel?
- Do you dislike waiting? If so, why?
- Do you have a daily spiritual practice, e.g., walking, meditating, journaling, etc?
- What was your experience of patience like when you were growing up?
- Can you envision a world where patience is the virtue it once was?

*"Learn the art of patience. Apply discipline to your thoughts when they become anxious over the outcome of a goal. Impatience breeds anxiety, fear, discouragement and failure." - Brian Adams*

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