

Regaining inner peace

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I'm going to suggest some ways to find, or regain, inner peace. But, before I do, here are some "symptoms" that can tug on our sleeve, indicating we have, in fact, lost our sense of inner peace.

1. I move through my day rather frenetically, often inattentive of the activities in which I'm engaged.
2. I discover, after the fact, emotions that were driving my thoughts, words or actions earlier.
3. I'm continuously bumping into things, losing things, dropping things and being careless.
4. I find it challenging to be focused on the present moment.
5. I often feel "off," "out of it," or disoriented.
6. When I'm walking, or headed to a meeting or other event, place or location, I'm more focused on getting there and unaware of my experiences along the way.
7. I'm unaware of physiological sensations of tension or upset until they become overwhelming.
8. I have lots of difficulty remembering people's names when I meet them for the first time.
9. I'm very "robotic" (unaware) in the way I moved to my day.
10. I listen, but I don't hear.
11. I spend a fair amount of my time during the day living in the past or the future.
12. I sometimes find myself doing something without being able to remember why I'm doing it.
13. I eat with a "mechanical hand" - food to mouth, food to mouth without really consciously engaging in my eating experience.
14. I sometimes have difficulty remembering what I read right after I read it.
15. The calm and balance I used to experience is now very elusive.

Stress

There's no question stress is affecting many of us, and it seems to greater and greater degrees as we move forward in our lives - at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

Inner peace

The underlying theme that runs through inner peace is simply that "all is well with the world." In this place, nothing or no one can sap our physical or psycho/emotional strength, make us angry, upset, jealous, fearful, sad, or the like.

The fact is, each one of us has access to inner peace - it's inside us, it's always been inside us. The question is, "What separates us from that inner peace?" So, to make it more personal, right here and right now, take a deep breath or two, relax as best you can, sense your feet on the floor and, if you're sitting, sense your back against the chair and allow the chair to support you, and ask yourself this question, "What is separating me, right here and right now, from the inner peace that I know is inside me?"

Be open, allowing and accepting and seeing what arises - without judgment, without criticism. Just be curious. What comes up for you? Tell the truth.

In essence, inner peace is a state where you are separate from your thoughts. Simple. But, not easy, right? Inner peace is a state where we're less externally focused and more internally focused. "Inside" is where peace, equanimity, calm, happiness, etc. rest not "out there." You cannot create externally what you want to experience internally. This bears repeating - you cannot create externally what you want to experience internally.

Letting go

What would it take for you to let go of the externals (people, places, circumstances, events - past, present and future) and "be" right here and right now?

It's not about thinking

The challenge is, "thinking" can't get us there. While the neo-cortex (thinking, rational, logical, executive) part of the brain

is powerful, it alone cannot get us to the place where we experience inner peace.

Other ways in

Moving into the right brain (e.g., the insula) and into the body is what allows us to access inner peace. For many folks meditation is the way in. But, it's not the only way. Many folks don't have the discipline or desire to meditate. And, that's OK. Research tells us there are many "real world" and practical ways to get there. Here are some:

Smile and/or laugh

Spend time with an animal

Spend time in nature, watch the clouds; just look out your window and see what you see.

Do something kind for someone (and it doesn't have to be on the "quantum" level)

Take a 30-second break at various times throughout your day to be by yourself and just breathe (no need to make anything happen - just breathe) or stretch (not "gym" stretching, but kind, gentle, relaxed stretching) and be curious.

Look around the room (or area, if you outside) and name the objects you see - no agenda here, no making anything happen, no judgment, just name what you see, while breathing gently.

Use "touch points" - at various times throughout the day. When you touch something, e.g., An eating utensil, a doorknob, a computer mouse, a toothbrush and the like, notice where you are, how you're feeling and what you're doing - without judgment or criticism. Just notice. And, breathe.

Notice five things in your day that you take for granted - that go unnoticed or are unappreciated - and be curious what we be like, for example, not to have these things, or notice their fine details, or notice how these things benefit you, etc. No judgment. And, breathe.

Scan your body. Starting at the top of your head and moving down through your body, pay attention to the physical feelings and sensations. Don't judge them as good or bad, don't try to change them, just be aware of them. Be curious. And, breathe.

These practices can support you to access inner peace, feel more grounded and centered and create a harmonious sense of balance. See what you see, what you discover. Be curious.

Some questions for self-reflection:

- Do you experience any of the 15 symptoms listed at the beginning of this article? If so, which ones and how often? What thoughts, feelings, and physiological sensations do you notice as you reflect on these symptoms?
- On a scale of one (low) to 10 (high), how would you characterize your stress level on an average day?
- Is stress causing you mental, physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual challenges? How so?
- If you're one who knows that you need to relax more, and you are either unable or unwilling to do so, what gets in the way? How so?
- Do you wear "crazy-busy" as a merit badge?
- On that 1-10 scale, above, how comfortable are you with being alone, spending time with yourself?
- To what degree do you look for "externals" to bring you "internal" inner peace? How's that working? Is it a sustainable process? Is it tiring or exhausting? Exhilarating?
- Do you ever feel victimized by the world, e.g., people, places, events, circumstances? How so?
- Do you spend a fair amount of time living in the past, or in the future? How so? What does living in the past or the future get you?
- Are you happy -really, really, really happy?

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I'm grateful for the opportunity to share this reading with you and I hope you find it insightful and useful. Perhaps you'll share this with others, post it on a bulletin board, and use it to generate rich and rewarding discussion.

What is the one thing that is keeping you from feeling successful, happy, confident, in control or at peace as you live your life - at work, at home, at play or in relationship? Maybe you know what that thing is maybe you don't. You just have a feeling that something has to change, whether or not you embrace that change. And how would that change support you

to show up as a "better you?"

I'm available to guide you to create relationships that reflect honesty, integrity, authenticity, trust, and respect whether at work or outside of work. I support you to focus on the interpersonal skills that enable you to relate to others with a high level of personal and professional satisfaction - unhampered by personal inconsistencies, beliefs, "stories," and behaviors that create barriers to a harmonious, pleasant, conscious, compatible, healthy and productive relationship.

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