

The need to figure everything out

"I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself." - Maya Angelou

Developmentally, most folks grow up in a "cause and effect" environment. We learn that when this happens, or you do that, something results and vice-versa. Our brains become wired to this phenomenon – cause, effect and connections. We search for patterns with people, places, events and circumstances – at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

"Why?" and the world of illusion

Along the way, we become curious, not only wanting to understand the "what" and "how" of things, but the "why" as well.

So, what happens when we don't know why? What happens if there is no pattern? What happens when there is no connection, no "permanence?" How do we respond/react?

Essentially, most folks attempt to create patterns when there are none – they create illusions. Illusions are connections, causes, and otherwise nonsensical and irrational "reasons" to explain "why." Many of us are unable or unwilling to live without answers. We have to have a handle on the natural order of the Universe. For example, we have an intense obsession (perhaps unconscious) to know the "why" of the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. We want to know why someone was affected and the person next door went untouched. Why? Why? Why?

Living with the unknown

For many folks, living with the unknown is uncomfortable, even unfathomable. The unknown for them is troubling and raises feelings of disharmony, imbalance, anxiety and even deep fear. It's like taking a psycho-emotional bungee jump. It's about the need for control. And when folks feel out of control, well, it's akin to dying. The unknown is the antithesis of feeling whole, complete and "safe" or "held."

So, rather than live with the unknown, we have this tendency to explain "what happened" with a "faux reality" which gives us a "faux" sense of comfort and safety. We construct an illusion and substitute this illusion for reality. Historically, folks have reached out to "Natural Law, "Natural Science," "God's will, "Karma and the like for explanations, for comfort, for the feeling of control in the face of the unknown.

The antidote to not knowing

The ironic piece of this puzzle - the illusions we create to make ourself feel safe in the world – is also the cause of our pain and suffering. Letting go of the illusion and being comfortable with the unknown – not knowing - is what ultimately results in freedom and empowerment.

Not knowing is an opportunity to take a deeper look inside – to explore and examine what's underneath our wanting to know and the effect this wanting has on our life - at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

Intellectually, we grasp for answers – our developmental, biological, psychological process at work. On a soul level, however, there can be a greater sense of distress about encountering the unknown. However, this distress is actually the "way in" to comfort, safety and security. Exploring our need to be the master of the unknown, exploring the "stories"

and illusions we create to explain the unknown – explorations which are often challenging – can bring us to a place where we can rest with not knowing.

As the Biblical story of Job points out, our lack of understanding can lead us to trust.

Our constant need to figure everything out, our constant self-sabotaging mantra that we “should” be able to figure everything out, only leads to greater pain and suffering.

We often hear “trust the process.” And it’s an operating principle worth taking to heart. Life is moving at ninety miles an hour, natural phenomena abound daily, and social dynamics occur in the blink of an eye. The mind is not always capable of understanding, of having all the answers. So, stop efforting to figure everything out.

It’s not to say we stop trying to understand life. But it does mean that we take the time to reflect on the inner turmoil and havoc we inflict on ourselves by wanting to know everything. It means that true well-being does not depend on being a know-it-all.

The obsession with trying to figure everything out actually takes us away from our experience in the moment. Preoccupied with figuring everything out keeps us from the inner space – below the neck – where we can learn and grow from our immediate experience by being present to it, being consciously aware of what we feel and sense, not think.

Engaging in the mental gyrations of trying to figure everything out keeps us from actually having an experience, feeling that experience, being in the experience, instead of being next to our experience. And, even if we think we have it all figured out, it’s usually but a short time before “buyer’s remorse” sets in – spending precious time and energy wondering if we’re “right, or feeling guilty, blaming, or stressed in some way that we may not have the answer, or the right answer.

Rather, if we set our intention to do our best and to learn on the fly, in the moment, we’re more apt to understand not only the “why,” but the “what” and “how” from another, different, more realistic perspective.

When we “are” the experience, inside it, we don’t need to make assumptions about what’s “right.” We have an “intuition,” and inner knowing that, curiously, arises without having to “figure it out.”

When we are the experience, we give up the tendency to allow the past to predict the present; we allow context, the experience itself, to guide us. We can “reflect” on the past, even look for patterns, but without having to have a “right” answer.

We’ve all had the experience of discovering how wrong our assumptions can be. And we’ve also had the experience of self-sabotage when we allow our assumptions get in the way.

Surrender and letting go

Surrender and letting go, as uncomfortable as that may sound and feel, inevitably allow us to meet our experience, naturally, without guilt, without shame, without stress, without blame and without pain and suffering.

Surrender and letting go are aspects of trust – not resignation, despair, or giving up – but trust in the knowing that one’s life force, not mind, is trustworthy, that there is no real reason to struggle or to effort to figure everything out.

"Cease trying to work everything out with your minds. It will get you nowhere. Live by intuition and inspiration and let your whole life be Revelation." - Eileen Caddy

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Do you find yourself resisting your experience much of the time? How do you resist? Why do you resist?
- Have you ever just surrendered and let go? What was that like for you?
- How did you learn about trust as you were growing up?
- Have you ever known exactly what to do without having had to "figure it out?" What was that experience like?
- Do you engage in constant research, deliberation or obsessing when you have a decision to make?
- Do you trust your "higher" self, your inner intelligence?
- Do you think all clarity comes from "inside your mind?"
- Can you trust that your life circumstances, even though you can't always explain them, are here for your awakening?

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Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or [pvajda\(at\)truenorthpartnering.com](mailto:pvajda@truenorthpartnering.com), or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda

