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## Impatience

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*"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, a high-level executive for a Fortune 50 company. She was returning 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 I don't know why, she stopped and added, "I have some good stuff in the fridge but these days the microwave just takes too long." Hmmm.

### Impatience is quite common

Google "impatience," and you'll come up with about 21,800,000 hits; impatience at work, 15,800,000; and impatience at home, 16,600,000. Impatience is a familiar topic. So, let's consider some aspects of living life from a place of impatience, and patience.

### Examples of impatience

If you reflect on how you live life from a place of impatience, here are some ways impatience might show up in your life. Consider:

#### At work:

- Being short or rude with co-workers, colleagues, 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 efforts, 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 requiring deeper focus and concentration, leading to less than optimal or disappointing results;
- Cutting corners, being unethical, and not acting with integrity;
- Experiencing stress, burnout, rustout, presenteeism (your body shows up but not you) and dis-ease;
- Needing to control.

#### At home:

- Treating your spouse/partner, children, parents with disrespect, communicated as "I don't have time for you;"
- Overcooking or undercooking meals you 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, or being distracted;
- 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 you often need to spend inordinate amounts of time and energy repairing, re-working and re-doing what you did when you were impatient.

## **The bane of patience? You'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 is it so many folks' idea of the "short-term" is tonight, and the "long-term is a week from tonight? What's the rush?

## **The loss of joy**

The obsessive need for people to "always 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 "finish this to get to that" creates a life akin to living in a void, bereft of pleasure, joy and happiness. And in that void, devoid of happiness, pleasure and meaning, they cannot settle, breathe, really breathe, and be at peace.

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

In a state of impatience, you race through life and in the process lose your capacity to experience true and real happiness, joy, fun, and appreciation for where you are in the moment. Impatience leads to psycho-emotional states of frustration, anger and fear – like living in a consistent state of overwhelm and 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 and feel your impatience. Sense where and how impatience shows up in your body. Allow your impatience. Don't fight it. Don't tell yourself a story about it. Just allow it to be. Observe it without judgment. Be curious about it.
- Breathe deeply into your belly. Feel your feet on the floor and, if sitting, feel your butt in your chair and allow the chair to support you. Allow the floor to support you. Breathe deeply, slowly.

- 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, intentionally, to the area(s) of discomfort.
- Welcome the breath and invite it to go to those uncomfortable place(s). Notice your experience, and as you do, time will begin to expand a little, then a little more, and a little more. You begin to "settle." As you watch, witness and observe yourself in this experience, your discomfort, your agitation and the impatience itself will begin to dissipate, dissolve, metabolize. 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. Here and now is all there is.

### **Impatience and the ego-mind**

Impatience is an ego-mind quality. The mind always needs to be "somewhere else." Patience is a heart/soul quality. The heart/soul is 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, you are in a state of conscious responsiveness, not unconscious reactivity.

Patience allows you to experience the moment, no matter where you are or whom you're with without the urgency to be "somewhere else." Patience supports you to practice presence or mindfulness - 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? Does patience have a negative connotation? How/when did you come to view patience as a vice rather than a virtue?
- Write ten words/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?
- How are you when you're alone? How do you experience silence?
- How does impatience show up in your life at work, at home, at play and in your relationship?
- Can you envision a world where patience is the virtue it once was?

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