

Section One – Self-Awareness is a First Step (excerpt)

*"Just as the tumultuous chaos of a thunderstorm brings a nurturing rain that allows life to flourish, so, too, in human affairs times of advancement are preceded by times of disorder. Success comes to those who can weather the storm." I Ching No. 3*

Becoming a better you often demands giving up something in order to take on a new way of being, doing or having the better you. Becoming a better you requires you to change some of your beliefs, assumptions and stories about your life and the world. This kind of change can be a scary proposition. Since childhood, your beliefs and stories have allowed you to feel safe and secure. Your beliefs and stories formed the lenses through which you've viewed your world. Becoming a better you means you need to re-think how you view your world and how you view yourself in that world.

When change happens, more often than not, you might cling to your past, to your habits, behavioral patterns and programming that have kept you safe and secure and provided you with an identity. Change is not unlike the fear of dying. Change means, "Who will I be?" Change often brings about fear. Your attachment to your past is the major obstacle standing in the way of a better you.

You can choose to accept change. This choice to change requires you to experience a form of "death and re-birth" while becoming comfortable with the tension created by living with the unknown.

What supports you in becoming a "better you" is to welcome the tension of change combined with the "death" of past beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and stories that keep you stuck in the past.

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We experience problems in our lives - at work, at home, at play and in relationship. It is part of the human condition.

Awareness is what allows us to (1) see how we create a problem and/or (2) see that there is nothing we can do about a particular problem. Each has its value.

For example, we cannot change the fact that life is impermanent. Things change. Life is based on cause and effect. Awareness (not just "knowing," as we'll see in a moment) of these truths helps us to let go. When we practice being aware and drop resistance, life's problems cease to be problems. Awareness is the key to reducing problems. Awareness allows us to see how we play our role in the cause and effect equation. "If I do/believe this, then that will/will not happen." "If I don't do/believe this, then that will/will not happen." Awareness is the key.

Most folks remain at a static level of awareness. Why? Because their environment makes no drastic changes. They feel that they are moderately successful with who they are and how they are. Life works for them. They continue to do what they have always done and in the way they have done it. They live on autopilot in a world of "programming" and habit, and often behave in

counter-productive and mentally and emotionally dysfunctional ways. They work to resist change. These people fail to see that they refuse new information or will not engage in new experiences. Awareness has come to a standstill for them.

Those who proactively seek awareness engage in efforts to change. They read. They attend classes. They welcome new ideas and perspectives. They try new things. They meditate. They interact with others different from themselves. They look for challenge and stimulation. With awareness, their perspective expands - moving from a focus on "me" to a focus on others, e.g., family, immediate groups, and perhaps to all of humanity and then to all living things. These folks see how they "faturized their past" to create their present and how their present creates their future.