

Suffering is our greatest teacher.

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You may have heard the term 'suffering is optional' (physiological suffering) or maybe you haven't but one thing is for sure, we've all experienced suffering. Some more than others, but either way, can we see suffering as a learning rather than a burden?

When we are suffering, life really is trying to teach us something about ourselves. When I first heard the words 'it's a healing universe' I didn't fully appreciate what it meant, but with time and a lot of self enquiry, I have come to understand (more of a Knowing) that life is always trying to show me what needs to be seen.

Suffering is an activity of resistance to what IS. When we experience something difficult or uncomfortable, grief for example, do we fight the experience, therefore extend its shelf life or do we allow the grief to be fully experienced, ie to inform us (heal us) and move on.

The question is...are we paying enough attention to the experience when it arises?

One analogy I like to use is that of a radio, i.e. are you tuned into the right frequency, how clear is the station that you are listening to? Did you have to turn the knob back and forth with a lot of fuzzy noise before the station became clear?

When we live with constant suffering, it's like there is a lot of noise going on (mostly erratic thinking and negative thoughts) but when (if) we free ourselves from suffering, we find that the frequency is clearer, everything settles down, the noise lessens, there is less to do, less to worry about, we come into being and we can meet life as it presents itself.

Is it possible to observe how we unconsciously support suffering? How does it function? Does it float around in our minds, as things happen to us that we don't like (or when life doesn't meet our expectations) we simply prolong the suffering by replaying it over and over again, i.e. we tell our friends, family, anyone who will listen and support 'the story'. The more we give the story attention, the more likely it will stick around. We also project ourselves into imagination and futurise the 'if's and but's', playing out all the possible scenarios...but for what purpose?

Now we are identified with the story, it appears to become a reality, it gets under our skin, it becomes personal and paradoxically, it can become your best friend. If suffering is indulged, it will contribute to ill health and can have a negative affect on our general well-being. Life becomes difficult, challenging, and we look to the outside world for resolution rather than look at our internal process.

How often can we be 'in the moment' and ask ourselves, "am I suffering right now" Mostly when we suffer, we are suffering needlessly because of a memory or expectation of something that already happened or may happen in the future. 99% of the time we are not suffering in the present moment.

The problem is that people would rather suffer because there is a familiarity to it, even when offered a way out, people prefer to hold onto suffering. Why is that? Because in suffering we are identified, it's like saying 'here I am and I matter' What's the alternative? Not to suffer...but in order not to suffer part of the apparent self must die, so it becomes a dichotomy! To suffer or not to suffer....that is the question!

So next time you come up against a situation you don't like and start resisting it, try something different. See if you can notice that your resistance is directly linked to your suffering. Once you see this clearly, new options will become available to you that weren't there before. Can you give the situation space to breathe and be heard without judgement. This is self enquiry, where nurturing and healing bring you into conscious awareness, where you can tune into life without the noise.

Remember suffering is optional, so what do you choose?



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As human beings, there is a tendency to get caught up in 'the dramas' of our life and miss the bigger picture of who we really are. These cards will help you in that endeavour.

Our work moving forward will focus more deeply in this area.

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