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WELLBEING QUICKSTART

When Life Gives You Lemons...



So recently I've been doing a major renovation that has involved removing the roof and demolishing some of the walls of my house. We put in years of planning and carefully developed a project timeline to avoid the rainy season during the demolition and external construction phase. And then (you guessed it) a completely unforeseen week long intense rain spell right in the midst of the dry season! Water damage throughout the building, wrecked furnishings and personal items – a lot of loss, heartache and frustration. A big clean up – endless mopping and salvaging what could be saved – a sigh of relief. And then just when we had regained our composure – more rain – this time several weeks of it – hopelessly watching everything get water logged – nothing more can be done – just waiting and watching everything getting ruined!

Don't just do something – stand there!

When things go wrong, be it daily hassles or bigger disasters, conventional wisdom tells us '*don't just stand there – do something!*' and this leads us to suppress our frustration, fear or sadness and rush into a problem solving adrenaline fuelled rescue mission – sometimes successful, other times not so much. Regardless of the outcome, when we rush into solution mode and suppress our emotions we increase our risk for stress related health problems. What if we could reverse the conventional wisdom and '*Stand there before we do something*' – pause to identify and accept our emotions as a first step in our response to the challenges we face? We can do this by using the Zen concept of 'Surrender' as a practical tool.

Surrender: Resisting or Embracing?

In Zen, 'Surrendering' means letting go of the need to control (or fight with) reality. It is not about giving up our agency within a situation but rather releasing any internal tension and rigid expectations – allowing us to peacefully accept the present moment as it is. The opposite of surrendering is resisting – where we experience anguish and stress as part of refusing to accept our circumstances and exert considerable effort to try to control reality. Surrendering is a great strategy for three reasons:

1. By fully embracing 'What Is' we stop resisting what has already occurred and attain a state of peace.
2. We can be fully present in the moment and respond authentically – maximising our own agency.
3. We can also recognise that everything in life is impermanent – and realise that our current challenges are a temporary state that will further evolve and change.

Bringing It Together

There is a stark difference between resisting or embracing unexpected adversity and challenges in life. Too many of us burn up energy trying to fight with our reality rather than fully embrace our reality. Surrendering, by fully embracing our reality, does not make us weak or passive but rather creates a pathway to inner peace and increased agency. Surrender is the 'lemonade' we can all make when 'life gives us lemons'!

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