

Wanting

Whenever we want something, we generally start suffering. We tell ourselves “I will be happy when I get what I want”. We are basically telling ourselves that we cannot be happy or contented until we get what we want. We believe that getting what we want is the only way we can end the discomfort of wanting, and if we believe that, that is what we will experience. But even if we get what we want it won't satisfy us for long, and we will soon want something else. Wanting doesn't just apply to material possessions; it applies to wanting to be seen, heard, understood, respected, loved, wanted, attractive, successful, famous, rich, enlightened, etc.

The happiness that we associate with getting what we want actually has nothing to do with getting it – we are happy and contented because we don't want anymore. We have incorrectly associated happiness with getting what we want, but actually it is “not wanting” that makes us happy. We are happy because the burden of wanting has been temporarily lifted.

The Self is whole, so it wants for nothing and is always happy. The ego-self, on the other hand, wants because it feels inadequate and lacking. The ego is trying to make up for its feelings of lack by acquiring things – hence all the wanting. External things cannot actually fill an internal hole – it is the value we put on these things that satisfies us, for a while at least. But when we realise that these things don't actually have any meaningful value, the illusion quickly wears off. Rather than learning from this experience we still mistakenly believe that something else will satisfy us, so we keep making the same mistake over and over again.

Wanting is a sense of lack, and “getting” is the ego's way of avoiding that sense of lack. Being comfortable with the lack/wanting is the first step in realising that there is no lack. It is a way of connecting with our Self, who knows no lack. So don't try to resist or repress your wanting – if you want something: feel the wanting. Then you may discover that you don't have to get what you want in order to feel good.

We feel good when we stop believing that wanting is bad and getting is good. We feel good when we simply allow the wanting to be. We feel good when we simply allow ourselves to be. It is the inner turmoil we create around wanting and getting that keeps us from feeling our inherent happiness and contentment.

Everything we truly want, we already have in abundance. We don't truly want a big house, a fast car, lots of money and our perfect “soul-mate” – what we truly want are the good feelings that we associate with having these things (e.g. peace, happiness and contentment). No matter what we think we want, what we all ultimately want is peace, happiness and contentment. We already have these essential qualities in abundance because they are aspects of our true nature; we have just lost sight of them. Wanting is a natural process that can help us to rediscover these “lost” essential qualities, but only if we really feel the wanting (and assign less importance to actually getting).

Wanting doesn't have to be a thread that we must follow until we get what we want. If we break the link that we have created between wanting and getting, we can simply allow our wanting to be; without feeling compelled to do anything about it. If we sit in our field of wanting and just “be” we will discover that everything we truly want is already present within us. When we break the link between wanting and getting, we discover a new link between wanting and already having. So don't try to deny your wants, and don't try to satisfy your wants – just feel them and discover that you already have what you truly want. Like everything else in life, wanting is a direct invitation to discover more of our true nature.

Unlike the ego's wanting, the soul's wanting is not motivated by fear and lack; it is driven by a longing for wholeness and unity. The soul can sense its own potentiality and has a natural desire to transform that potential into reality. This authentic wanting is what drives authentic psychological and spiritual development. In contrast, the ego's “spiritual” wanting (e.g. psychic powers and abundance) leads us away from the authentic path and impedes our authentic development.

Motivation

If our motivation for personal or spiritual development is to ease our personal suffering and feel happier, we may achieve some short-term success, but we won't succeed in developing our consciousness. If our motivation comes from the ego-self we will never succeed. In order to succeed the motivation has to come

from the true-Self and it has to be for a higher purpose. We will only succeed in our development when we are not doing it for personal gain. We will only succeed when we align ourselves with the universal goal – the evolution of consciousness as a whole. When our personal will is aligned with universal will we cannot fail to succeed.

In the grand scheme of things our personal insecurities, fears, worries and problems are insignificant. The universe exists for consciousness to develop and evolve, and it can do that through any medium. The personality is the medium that the Self uses to develop its consciousness (the soul). So the personality doesn't have to be perfect from a subjective point of view, but it is always perfect from the soul's point of view (i.e. it perfectly fits the soul's current developmental needs).

The evolution of consciousness is so slow because different parts of us often have conflicting interests and motivations. Consciously we may want to grow and evolve, but the wounded parts of us that we have exiled or repressed don't want us to move on because they don't want to be left behind. This can adversely affect our motivation to do the inner work. We make occasional efforts to overcome our negative patterns, but most of the time we continue feeding them (usually subconsciously). Without presence and conscious awareness our progress will be slow.

Our journey of Self-discovery is partly motivated by our soul's natural desire to evolve and partly motivated by our ego's desire to be free from suffering. The ratio largely depends on our overall level of development (how far along the path we have travelled), but it also varies from moment to moment depending on our personal circumstances.

Once we realise that the evolution of consciousness is our very purpose for living, we have discovered the meaning of life. This "knowing" activates a latent drive within us – a drive to realise our true-Self and to clear whatever prevents us from doing so. It awakens our curiosity to uncover our subconscious psychological material and activates the courage we need to face it.

Resistance

On the face of it the ego wants to develop and grow – it wants to become all that it can be. But deep-down the ego knows that psycho-spiritual development will eventually result in its dissolution, so it subconsciously resists. Basically, part of the ego wants to evolve (because it is suffering) and part of the ego wants to stay the same (because it is safe and known). This makes our journey of awakening much more challenging than we might imagine. But the ego gets off on hard work – it gets off on "doing" because it doesn't like "being". And while we are busy "doing" we are probably not "being", which keeps us identified with our ego-self and not our true-Self. So the ego's resistance prolongs its existence.

The ego's resistance cannot be tackled head on. The more force we exert against the ego, the more it will resist. The ego's resistance can only be overcome with a passive, non-confrontational approach. We have to gently bypass the ego's defences rather than launching a full-frontal assault. If we don't threaten the ego, it won't feel threatened, so it won't resist as much.

The most effective way of gently overcoming the ego's resistance is to become supremely conscious – to bring all of our subconscious psycho-logical material into the light of our consciousness. Practices such as self-inquiry, meditation, body-awareness and conscious living all help with that. Once we make our subconscious material conscious it loses much of its power because the conscious mind will not allow detrimental sub-conscious patterns to be acted out unchallenged.

Suffering

The true-Self is an active agent in the natural unfoldment of Life – it actively goes with the flow of Life. The false-self, on the other hand, resists the natural unfoldment of Life and tries to manipulate Life to its own selfish and short-sighted ends. If seven billion egos actually had the power to directly manipulate Life, life on Earth would be a living hell. Fortunately, Life isn't so easily swayed, and the consequences for trying to control Life are suffering. I am not talking about some external karmic punishment; I am talking about self-inflicted suffering that is the result of resisting "what is". It is comparable to a little boy having a tantrum when he doesn't get his own way – his suffering is entirely self-inflicted.

We can end our suffering right now – we just have to drop our beliefs, stop believing our thoughts, stop buying into our emotions, stop trying to control everything, stop reacting to everything and stop resisting everything. In short, we have to drop everything we think we are, because none of it is who we truly are. All these things are ego and we are Self.

Our entire self-image is wrong: “who we think we are” is just a figment our imagination, and we aren’t completely sure if “who we really are” even exists. We are blind to our true-Self because we are so identified with our false concept of self. To awaken to our true nature we have to give up our (false) concept of self. We have to let go of “who we think we are” because it is not who we truly are. We cannot discover our true-Self until we drop our identification with our ego-self.

We have to at least be open to the possibility that we are not who we think we are; that we may have got it wrong all these years. We have to be open to the possibility that things may be different to how we think they are. We have to be open to the possibility that we may know absolutely nothing about the true nature of our Self or reality. Unless we open ourselves to these possibilities we have zero chance of awakening to wholeness.

Life can be compared to an ocean wave – we can be carried along almost effortlessly on the crest of the wave, or we can be dragged along in the wake, kicking and screaming and struggling to keep our head above water. The crest of the wave is the present moment, and to ride it requires conscious active engagement with Life. If it weren’t for the ego’s resistance we could be living on the crest of Life’s wave all the time, instead of struggling and suffering unnecessarily.

Acceptance

Acceptance is more likely to bring about a shift than resistance, because acceptance allows things to move on, whereas resistance causes them to stand still. Acceptance means fully experiencing “what is” without any resistance, judgment, analysis or agenda. When our consciousness is fully experiencing “what is” without any resistance, judgment, analysis or agenda, we are fully present. When our consciousness is identified with something that we are experiencing, we are not fully present. When we are fully present there can be no resistance, because resistance comes from the ego. When we are fully present there is no ego; only Self/soul.

Acceptance means we don’t have to be anyone or do anything – we can simply “be”. This type of radical acceptance can be challenging for some people because “not doing” can be confused with being lazy, passive, fatalistic or giving up on life, but the only thing we are giving up is our ego’s resistance.

Acceptance doesn’t mean that we have to be a passive victim; nor does it mean that we have to fight back aggressively – the world is only black and white to the ego. If we are genuinely present our Self will intuitively guide us as to what approach is required. When we stop strategising, struggling and resisting we can tap into the intuitive guidance of our Self. When we stop listening to the ego we are better able to hear the silent voice of our Self. Acceptance allows us to transcend the thinking mind and enter into the non-conceptual world of direct knowing and direct experience.

The more we practice being present, especially when life is challenging or boring, the easier it becomes to accept Life without resistance. The problem is never with Life (Life is perfect); the problem is with our perception of Life (we are just not seeing the inherent perfection of Life).

Life’s Inherent Perfection

Life is the dynamic unfoldment of potentiality into actuality. Life unfolds as it interacts with Self. Life animates each individual Self, so we are all one, but we are also individual.

Life is a dynamic process that moves with grace, direction and purpose. Each moment of Life gracefully follows that direction and is attuned to that purpose. So each moment of Life is inherently perfect, no matter what the ego-self may think about it. Whenever we resist Life we are separating ourselves from the perfection that is unfolding.

Life is a journey not a destination, so where we are right here and now is far more important than our final destination. Wherever we are on our journey right now is perfect – perfect for our soul’s development.

Striving to get “there” or attain enlightenment takes us away from Life’s inherent perfection in this present moment and it takes us away from our inherent perfection in this present moment. When our attention is focussed on the past or the future we are depriving our soul of the perfect experiential growth opportunity that is right here and now.

“What Is” Is Meant To Be

If we want to awaken, we must stop resisting “what is”, i.e. let go and allow life to unfold naturally in this very moment, without analysing it, judging it, resisting it or trying to control it. This doesn’t just apply to the present (what is); it also applies to the past (what was) and the future (what will be):

- **The Past:** Believing (in the present moment) that a past event shouldn’t have happened or was wrong is resisting “what was”. Changing the past is impossible, so resisting the past is futile – it can only result in unnecessary suffering. The same is true of continually rehashing or regretting past events. Accepting what has happened is the only way to find peace.
- **The Future:** Manipulating matters (in the present moment) to affect the future is resisting “what will be”. Putting all our efforts into trying to manipulate one particular future is a big gamble – if it comes off we will be happy for a while, but if it doesn’t we will be disappointed for a lot longer.

Whatever has happened, is happening or may happen doesn’t have to be judged good or bad. Be it pleasant or unpleasant – “it is what it is” and it is meant to be that way. If we judge it as “good” we will be sad when it ends, and if we judge it as “bad” we won’t be happy until it ends. But more importantly, judging implies that we want everything to be good and nothing to be bad. This sets us up for more unnecessary suffering because we can’t control life enough to make that happen – Life simply happens.

If we put all of our effort into trying to achieve something and it happens, it doesn’t mean that we have succeeded; it just means that it was meant to be that way. If we put all of our effort into trying to achieve something and it doesn’t happen, it doesn’t mean that we have failed; it just means that it wasn’t meant to be that way. No matter how life turns out it is exactly how it is meant to be. Life gives us the experiences that we need for our development. What actually happens in our lives is meaningless (from a cosmic perspective); it is what we get from the experience that counts.

Trust (or Faith)

When we resist Life by saying “this should be happening” or “that shouldn’t be happening”, we are trying to limit Life’s infinite potential. We are sanctioning only one outcome out of countless possibilities, and in doing so we are setting ourselves up for unnecessary suffering:

- **“Success”:** If things turn out how we wanted, the ego takes all the credit and puffs itself up with pride. This strengthens our ego, which is detrimental to our development and prolongs our unnecessary suffering.
- **“Failure”:** If things don’t turn out how we wanted, the super-ego judges us a failure and we feel bad. This weakens our ego, so we have to reinforce it through some other egotistical behaviour. This too is detrimental to our development and prolongs our suffering.

The only way to stop resisting Life is to trust it – to be open to Life, with an open mind and an open heart. With trust we can learn to accept “what is” without any judgements agendas or strategies, to fully feel “what is”, and to be grateful for “what is”. We may have no idea why life is leading us along a particular path, but we don’t need to know. When we have an open heart and an open mind, we are open to the truth of reality. We are open to perceiving objective reality instead of the subjective overlay that we usually project out onto the world. We are open to perceiving “what is” rather than trying to control everything.

Complaining about our circumstances only increases our suffering because we are expressing our resistance and putting it out into the world. We are trying to turn a subjective opinion into objective reality. The more “reality” we give it, the more we will suffer. It is healthier to simply notice and feel whatever is happening within us (in response to life’s events) because that demonstrates our acceptance of Life and our trust in Life.

In biblical times, trust was called “faith”, and Life was called God. God is not a being that controls the universe; God is the dynamic process that is the universe unfolding, so that consciousness can evolve through direct experience.

Gratitude

Gratitude is very important because it demonstrates that our acceptance and trust are total. It demonstrates that we know Life is doing its best so that our consciousness can evolve.

It is easy to feel thankful or grateful when something good happens, but are we supposed to feel grateful when something bad happens? Are we supposed to feel grateful when we are bored? Are we supposed to feel grateful when someone annoys us or insults us?

- **Yes:** If we are not grateful for what we have and how things are, we must want things to be different. And resisting “what is” inevitably leads to unhappiness and suffering. Gratitude takes acceptance to another level – it is not merely accepting “what is”; it is being truly thankful for “what is”; it is being truly thankful for Life.
- **No:** If we tell ourselves that we should be grateful we are just creating another thought-form that will block us from our true-Self. So gratitude has to be authentic – it has to come from the heart – it cannot be forced. If we don’t feel like being grateful to Life it means our consciousness is currently caught up in an ego structure. But if we go within and connect with our soul, we can connect with all of our essential qualities, including gratitude.

Gratitude is not something that many of us do, but practicing gratitude on a daily basis can help us to connect with our soul’s essential qualities (even those that haven’t been transposed into usable personal qualities). Proponents of Positive Psychology suggest that we should review our day each evening and identify three things that we are grateful for. They can be specific things such as enjoying lunch with a close friend, or general things such as being grateful for waking up in the morning or getting through the day. Gratitude also gives us a more positive outlook on life – focusing on the positive helps us to align with our soul, whereas focussing on the negative keeps us rooted in the ego.

If we stop judging we can be grateful for everything and make gratitude a way of life. Gratitude gives us a bigger perspective on life, it allows us to experience the full spectrum of life, and it enables us to find genuine happiness that is not dependant on external circumstances.

Life’s Challenges

Our reactions to challenging events and challenging people show us where we are stuck. When difficult people “push our buttons” they show us our reactive behavioural patterns; they show us what we still need to work on. So instead of getting angry and resentful we should really thank them and love them.

We have a choice to keep feeding the reactive behaviours that block our happiness or, with conscious awareness, we can catch these patterns before they take hold of us. We have a choice to see difficult people and situations as opportunities for growth (ultimately resulting in genuine happiness), or we can wallow in self-inflicted pity or stew in self-created anger. You decide.

As long as we continue to hold onto ego-based expectations about how life should be and how other people should behave, we are setting ourselves up for a life of disappointment and unhappiness. If we drop our expectations and actively accept what life sends our way, then we can be happy. We can learn to live our lives with child-like curiosity, fully engage with life in the present moment and be thankful for our experiences. Or we can keep trying (in vain) to make things go our way, keep worrying about what might happen if they don’t, and keep feeling bad when they don’t. Again, it is your choice.