

LIVING WITH AMBIVALENCE

Peace of mind and happiness are not found by being free from the storm. They are found in the mind that is at ease with itself, despite its contradictions and ambivalences. The mind can either be hell or heaven. It all depends on the nature of your thoughts and feelings and how you respond to them. In fact, it's our responses to our thoughts and feelings that matter the most. The hypercritical, uncompassionate mind is the one that can make heaven into hell. It can even find fault and blame where there is none... such is its expertise. It considers itself omniscient - all knowing - and it need not take advice or consider other options, because they'd be inferior anyway... such is its ignorance and arrogance. Whenever we choose condemnation over compassion and blame over personal responsibility, we create our own prison in which we become trapped by thoughts and feelings that torture us. The reason many of us defer to the hypercritical, uncompassionate mind is that somewhere inside of us lives the feeling that this is what we deserve and so we are not worthy of something better. This feeling lurks deep inside, annoyingly reciting this toxic mantra and sadly over many years we've learned to accept and come to believe this recital. Does any of this sound familiar?

There's an easy way to break this pattern and establish a mind that is at ease with itself and therefore free from the internal storms. The method is simple... learn to live ambivalently. What does this actually mean? Well, it's about accepting your contradictions, flaws, dualities, your inconsistencies, and your fears, doubts, and bad habits. The more you accept these parts of yourself and choose not to judge them harshly the more you'll be able to find peace of mind, happiness, and well-being. It is our relentless war of attrition with our less-desirable parts that binds us to internal turmoil and external chaos. Living with your ambivalence allows you to relax and let go of the tensions and anxieties that conflict creates. The stress of conflict literally diminishes mind, body, spirit, and poisons us at every level (see Waste Weakens). When we can accept our flaws and contradictions that shift in consciousness frees that energy bound up with conflict, enabling us to find clarity, relaxation and eventually joy. Doesn't it make more sense to treat your less-desirable bits as if they were your friends rather than your enemies, especially given that you waste so much energy and time in the process? (See Old Friend Dear Friend).

Try this for one week... All those things you relentlessly give yourself a hard time about, accept them as parts of yourself being in transition. They are those parts of you that have not yet become all they are capable of being. So don't criticise or condemn them. Is it fair to condemn a child who has not yet learned a skill? We need to understand that some parts of us are more evolved than other parts. Our lives are wonderful opportunities for the growth and learning necessary to help those less evolved aspects flourish. This growth is best achieved with a compassionate mind and an accepting heart. Ambivalence is actually okay! In fact, it's more than okay... it's life's heartbeat. If we look around us, we'll see that life in all its many guises is teaching us the art of living with and embracing contradiction and polar opposites. The more we're able to do that the better we're able to see ourselves, understand the world and find a life of meaning and purpose. The pointless condemnation of ourselves means we misspend our life force and miss our reason for being here. How can we find our real meaning and purpose if we're busy believing we have no value, no worth? Make a pact with yourself today to accept your shortcomings, to accept where you're still 'not getting it right', to accept your feelings of disappointment with yourself and to realise through this acceptance you'll come to know what peace of mind and joy really look like. They both exist in the mind that has learned to live with its ambivalence.