

Lesson 121: Pushing Past Adversity

Life is an unavoidable interaction of internal and external influences, collectively shaping and molding the nature of your personal reality. The combined effect of your own internal influences acting on your reality and daily interactions with the environment, and all its many influences, including the people, places and things you interact with directly or indirectly cannot help but give way to adverse situations occurring in your reality from time to time. Adversities are not random or chance events haphazardly occurring in your reality out of nowhere without reason nor are they “misfortunes,” although they certainly can feel that way. They are the result of internal and external causes that manifest as unwelcomed unpleasant undesirable effects experienced in your reality, interacting entanglements much too broad and individualized to enhance on in detail. To the extent that your reality is affected, is not solely the result of the adversity itself but is the result of your reactions too. Strong reactions and resistance to change can magnify even the slightest adverse situation, circumstance or event. Pushing past adversity requires a calm state of mind reliant on mindfulness and clarity of mind, not easily attained when you are overcome by strong feelings and emotions, typically giving rise to blame, confusion and fear, influences that are counterproductive to ceasing the mental and emotional suffering that goes hand in hand when adversity strikes. The goal of this lesson is to expose hidden internal influences that not only have a say in how you react to adversity; they are the say. They are the directing forces operating from within that when left unexamined can wreak more havoc in your life than an adverse situation, circumstance or event, which makes pushing past adversity more difficult than need be.

Given that the cause of every adversity experienced in your reality is not always so blatantly obvious, and as things are seldom as they appear on the surface, attempting to identify such causes is often a futile effort. This is especially true when it involves the influence of others acting on free will, ultimately making choices and decisions that adversely affects your reality. Even when an adverse event appears to be the result of an obvious cause, does not mean there are not other underlying internal causes at work, contributing factors not seen and therefore not known about, making matters that much worse. The revelation of very important self-truths not only explains highly charged reactions to adversity, being mindful of how these inner forces are affecting your reality can alleviate the intensity of an adverse situation and hence the suffering, which is the ultimate goal. Considering that suffering is both a cause and an effect, there is no better way to open the discussion than to state the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths, as each truth addresses very important aspects of personal suffering that when seriously considered puts the matter of suffering in its proper perspective. The first noble truth is the truth of suffering, which is to be fully understood as a fact encountered in life. The second truth is the truth of suffering’s origin or craving, which is to be abandoned. The third truth is the truth of the cessation of suffering, which is to be realized. The fourth truth is the

truth of the path, which is to be developed. The path is the Noble Eightfold Path attained by way of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These are fundamental life changing principles that stand on their own merit. When put to the test, the results are not only self-evident, assimilation and integration of these principles in your day-to-day reality ceases suffering, the affects of which are tangibly realized in your reality.

There are times when the best thing you can do is not expend the mental energy it takes to chase the cause of an adversity that is out of your control down the proverbial rabbit hole. In such cases, it might be best to accept the situation as it is; turn the focus of your attention in the direction of moving forward, which is where change happens, thus ceasing needless suffering. The mental and emotional effort it takes to analyze the cause of an adverse situation that is out of your control and that you had little or no say in is like swimming against the tide, in the end nothing really changes. Change begins from within not without, thus chasing down causes that are outside of your control is not only futile, it is mentally taxing, emotionally exhausting and physically draining. Your effort is best spent discerning how the karmic dots between adversity and your reactions to it connect, as your reactions to adversity can all too easily make mountain ranges out of tiny anthills. Bearing in mind that the word “karma” is Sanskrit for “action,” hence karma is the combination of conscious and unconscious actions and interactions that weave an entangled web, sometimes adversely affecting your reality as well as the reality of others, and vice versa. As everyone reacts differently to adversity, some people find healthy outlets, whereas others resort to unhealthy outlets and as such, manifested outcomes vary widely which has an impact on how personal reality is experienced in the present as well as in the future. As habitual reactions and resistance to change shapes future events, similar adverse events will continue to unfold in your reality, including suffering if the reactionary pattern does not change in a way that is beneficial to you regardless of external causes.

Many internal and external influences weave through the fabric of your day-to-day reality and likewise affect your reality, positively and negatively, both of which you feel the effects of in the course of any one day. Since you are the recipient of your own causes and effects, as are others, the importance of being aware of how you react to adversity and resist change, which is both a cause and an effect, cannot be emphasized enough. The principle of cause and effect is a fundamental law of operation acting in manifested reality with relative certainty, manifesting in your reality as an undesirable event and with it comes personal suffering. As the Law of Cause and Effect puts in motion the Law of Retribution, the Law of Consequences, understanding the role you play that does indeed shape your reality is not only essential to pushing past adversity, cessation of suffering is paramount to balancing or rebalancing your well being. As adversity and more so your reactions to such unwelcomed events in your life tend to unbalance your mental and emotional stability, conversely is that cessation of suffering

relies on your mental and emotional ability to push past the adversity in order to balance or rebalance your mental and emotional stability. Thus, pushing past adversity means stabilizing the very same internal influences that at present are not stable and perhaps have not been stable for a very long time.

Socrates said, "...life without this sort of examination is not worth living." The Greek oracle at Delphi wisely advised to "know oneself." Thus knowing something more about yourself on a much deeper level by way of examination, whether in response to your own internal forces or in response to external influences, no less subject to your own reactions, the mechanism of which is internal, is the key to pushing past adversity which ultimately has the power to cease suffering. Knowing what internal influences you are responding to and why, are very important personal revelations, as awareness of these internal forces and how they are affecting your reality is not only knowing yourself, knowing empowers you to accept things you cannot change and change the things you are empowered to change, always proportionate to the level of your awareness. It is important to remember that choices and decisions made in a reactionary state of mind carries its own consequences that tend to make matters worse, thus increasing suffering.

The difference between pushing past adversity without carrying the negative effects with you every single day and pushing past adversity while carrying the negative effects for some undesignated period of time is very distinct, as these are two very different energies producing very different effects which you inevitably experience in your reality, positively or negatively. The internal dig for the sake of knowing yourself is worth every ounce of mental effort required, given that distortions can surely jade your perception of reality and color your world a shade darker, which is not a true representation of your reality but is subjectively distorted at best. As time goes by and as you move further past the adversity, you might be fooled into thinking that you really are okay, that no real damage was done, at least not on a psychological level. However, that is not always the case. Just because you cannot see the internal damage, does not mean it will not adversely manifest in some manner of speaking at some point in your life, even attract adversities. Assessing internal damage is essential to your well-being because the psychological effects tend to remain long after an adverse event passes through your reality, especially those that are life changing; the problem is that you don't know about it until there is cause for the damage to surface. In the meantime, the damage is silently festering internally without your awareness. The evidence of festering feelings and emotions becomes apparent when the next adversity arises in your reality and your reactions to it are far worse than your reactions to preceding events, as they tend to build on one another and worsen over time. This more intense reactionary state of mind and strong emotions are triggered by conflicting push/pull forces, internal forces rising up against external influences. When the internal valve is not opened slowly, these conflicting forces let loose like an emotional explosion, releasing pressure cooker like pent up frustrations. A course of self-introspection is well worth the effort so that pent

up frustrations, feelings and emotions do not explode full throttle, ultimately causing even more internal damage, which of course carries its own destructive consequences that will adversely manifest in your reality, and all things being relative, increases your suffering.

While the fall into the pit of mental and emotional disparity is a fast downhill slide, especially when adversity strikes suddenly as it often does, the climb out of the pit is often a slow going process of scraping and clawing your way out. Your own distorted perceptions will keep you tethered to the bottom of the pit making it even more difficult to get out of reactive mode, resulting in an unavoidable mental and emotional self-inflicted self-imprisonment. Climbing out of the pit requires that you first examine your own perceptions, followed by an examination of the beliefs that uphold your perceptions, as these two influences fuel your thought patterns, which in turns fuels your feelings and emotions, and then back around. These interacting influences are circular in that they fuel one another, ultimately giving rise to unrealistic expectations, whether of others or of yourself, which is particularly harmful, as living up to unrealistic expectations is a recipe for personal disaster that will adversely manifest in your reality. However, the examination of these strong influencing factors cannot be based on what you currently know about yourself. You have to know something other than what you currently know because what you know is limiting which acts as a mental barrier preventing you from seeing your reality as it really is.

As right knowledge is essential, you must get past the limitations of what you know and learn something you do not know about yourself that is adversely influencing your reality, which you do by seeking out new information as you are intuitively led. Whether you do this on your own accord or seek outside help, you owe it to yourself to learn new things about yourself that you have not been in touch with yet. Knowing yourself from within explains the outer self you keep experiencing, not just in response to adversity but is even attracting adversity of which you feel the lingering effects long after the adversity has passed through your reality. Knowing yourself from within answers questions that without provocation are left unexamined and therefore unidentified, which is why certain aspects of your reality never seem to change and will not change until something within you changes first, hence right action is key to ceasing the personal suffering that goes hand in hand with adversity. Making the effort to know more than you know about yourself is right action that results in right view.

Forest Gump said that “Life was like a box of chocolates, you never know what your gonna get.” Although adversity can surely change aspects of your reality in very unexpected and most undesirable ways, and even though certain things may not be the same as they were before, does not mean that your reality will not morph into a whole new experience in due time. You never know what desirable changes are waiting around the corner of life, thus the axiom, “never say never” because you really do not know what

your “gonna get.” Contrarily, people have a tendency to want to believe that every adversity encountered leaves an indelible mark in their reality that in turn negatively affects everything about their reality from then on, often say things like, I will ‘never’ be the same again or my reality will ‘never’ be the same. Such limited thinking is not just a mental obstacle, it is a psychological barrier not easily moved without some degree of self-introspection sufficient to lift the veil of illusion and delusion. You may not be the same again and your reality may not be the same but that does not mean life is over, it just means that new potentials are waiting to become actualized experiences that otherwise could not manifest in your reality without the benefit of change.

Just as adversity is the result of interactions with the environment, so adversity is the result of your own internal influences that don’t just co-mingle with each other; they often collide with one another. Thus, it is not so much the adversity that leaves a lasting impress in your psyche as does the effects of your response. Reactive responses to adversity and ultimately resistance to change are the causes that leave the seemingly indelible mark impressed in your psyche, sometimes taking on the form of a mental image, a Jungian archetype that remains embedded in your psyche until it is finally identified. The effort it takes to identify the mark hidden in your subconscious is worth the cognitive effort because it is an internal influence negatively affecting the nature of your personal reality. Negativity is not a cause. Negativity is the effect of not having properly identified reactive internal influences that directly affects your state of mind, impairs your mental faculties, thus rendering your ability to think clearly nearly inoperable, thereby clouding your judgment and making it difficult to see your reality for what it really is. Limited thinking, distorted perceptions and unrealistic expectations are self-created subjective illusions that delude your sense of objective reality, inevitably giving way to more negativity, hence the less you really know yourself. However, bear in mind that coming to know things about yourself, and while such discoveries reveal important self-truths, they are not really you. These discoveries are not the true essence of the real you, they are the consequences of the unavoidable interactions with the environment such as you experience it, thus they are effects that have altered your reality internally and externally, and likewise have altered your sense of self; as you change, your sense of self changes too.

As adversity occurs in life and does so in response to many influencing forces, there are those that are within your control and those that are outside of your control. Discernment is the key to making accurate distinctions between these two influences, as they do require different approaches. While you cannot control the choices and decisions others make when acting on their own free will, you can control your response to these external influences, which directly affects outcomes. Thus, it is important to identify these influences, as making such distinctions with clarity of mind is crucial in pushing past adversity and the cessation of suffering. Although discernment is often

much easier said than done, it can be done at any point along the way whenever there is clarity of mind.

Feelings and emotions tend to run high in the face of adversity, giving way to denial and blame right out of the starting gate. Denial and blame are reactive knee jerk like responses that not only distorts your reality, they are distractions in that they keep your attention focused in the wrong direction and on the wrong things, none of which is the least bit beneficial when it comes to pushing past adversity and ceasing suffering. Denial and blame are mental and emotional obstacles, internal influences acting as roadblocks that prevent you from seeing the things you really need to see when you most need to see them, and with clarity of mind. Denial is a disabling influence, an internal force that keeps you from discerning the truth of the situation, further compounded when blame jumps in, thus adding to the confusion and muddying up the waters that much more. Added to this mix of negative internal influences are the effects of distorted perceptions that support and even fuel denial and blame, entrenching you even further into the tight grips of negativity, even when the adversity is an event that occurred outside of your control. The influences that are in your control are your reactions, as is the cessation of your suffering, but this does not come with ease. It takes time to unravel the hidden internal causes that account for your external reactions.

There is a season for everything and everything occurs in cycles, including the adversities that come and go in your life. Some people come through their seasons or cycles not having learned a single thing because their mental attitude is very resistant to change and even more resistant to learning new things. Being blocked by perceptions that are just so distorted, prohibits them from seeing their own reality for what it really is, and so have a tendency to blame others for their seeming misfortunes. Consequently, the nature of their personal reality appears to be a chain of ongoing or like-kind undesirable events that continue to unfold, which of course, is always the fault of someone or something else. Breaking the chain of ongoing adverse events requires internal examination, which is an intentional choice. There just is no other way. No one is going to wave any magic wands over you or your reality nor is anyone going to deliver you from your adversities nor the causes or the effects of them. Denial, blame and resistance carry its own consequences, the effects of which cannot be avoided.

As life is about learning all the many lessons that come your way, adversities are opportunities for personal development and spiritual growth, which is the sole purpose for life to begin with, not easily accomplished without the benefit of firsthand experience. Thus, the road to evolutionary progress does not come without its fair share of strife and difficulties but every lesson learned alters your character and strengthens your constitution, thus cultivating inner development and spiritual growth. Eventually you will arrive at a place in your life where the adversities and the inevitable changes that will occur, as nothing in life is as certain as change, will not rock your mental and

emotional boat as severely, if at all. Those who have blazed this well-worn trail know all too well the difficulties involved in pushing past adversity for the sake of inner development and increased spiritual growth. That it can be done and has been done by many people of ancient and modern times is truly a lamp lit under thy feet, a living testament and guidepost for those who are blazing the same or similar trails.

Some people really have to work hard at pushing past adversity, even more so when they come face to face with difficult truths they otherwise would not have known about, as the discovery of such personal truths are often very hard pills to swallow. Even conventional psychology knows this is a well-worn path and can help to find answers to certain dilemmas, eventually overcoming internal weaknesses that exacerbate even the slightest adversity. For example, rejection and abandonment are probably the most common afflictions people suffer from, mentally and emotionally that can wreak all kinds of internal havoc. The problem is that both the root cause and the effects are psychological dots not previously connected until these things are brought up to the surface of conscious awareness. The recognition of such contributing factors, discovering the root cause when it is possible to do so, is a pivotal moment for those who dared to embark on a journey of self-discovery, whether in therapy or relying on self-help sources and resources to put things in perspective. Many people start out on the path of self-discovery well intended but never see the journey through because undergoing such intense self-examination is not easy.

Pushing past adversity means actually integrating the things learned, as what good is new information if the knowledge acquired is not ever woven into the fabric of your day-to-day reality, which is where and how change occurs. However, integrating new information can be a daunting task when your internal pendulum tends to swing from one extreme to another. The effort it takes to keep the swing of the pendulum as close to center as possible means learning new things about yourself that explains why you act and react as you do, the knowledge of which brings the pendulum to center or at least closer to center as self-discoveries are progressive. Initially, such discoveries are likely to go against the grain of your well-established thought patterns and belief structures, as well as your perceptions of yourself and your reality, along with the expectations you have of yourself and others that when examined often prove to be rather unrealistic. Consequently, you are not just pushing past adversity, you are essentially pushing past your conditioned self as well as your self-made boundaries and limitations not easily identified, and hence not reconciled right out of the starting gate. The most difficult challenge is to break through the mental block of automatic denial, blame and resistance, which is essential to getting past things that have long been ingrained and not easily relearned. This is especially true when these things are heavily influenced by the sway of environmental influences that when taken at face value, believing them to be objective facts of reality even when they are subjective interpretations of reality are difficult to get past without a fair amount of cognitive effort.

When adversity strikes, it is as if life comes against you intentionally and in some respects, at least karmically speaking, this is true. The sole purpose for your life in this incarnation may well be to balance out your own karmic scale from prior life experiences, thus come the adversities for the sake of karmic balance. When you put an adversity in an educational perspective, think in terms of what can be learned from the experience, the shift in mental attitude changes the energy of the experience from being a very negative experience to being a more positive experience, especially when you take the lessons learned from the experience and put them to good use. This is not always easy to do, especially when certain fundamentals acting in your reality are not things you are aware of yet. Thus, adversity can surely feel more like a personal attack than a learning catalyst.

Identification of internal influences adversely acting in your reality cannot be overstated or emphasized enough. The importance and significance of identifying internal contributing causes is worth its weight in gold. Freedom from psychological bondage is no small feat; for some people, arriving at critical truths is not just an accomplishment, it is a personal victory of megalithic proportions. The discovery of your own truths is not only liberating, as it puts things about your life in perspective, such truths affect every aspect of your being, thereby directly affecting the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical planes of your reality, as none of these planes are ever separate from one another but are all intertwined. So when you come to identify significant truths about yourself and you see how these hidden internal forces have been adversely affecting your reality, pertinent to your own circumstances, frees you to relearn how to live your life without the affect of these influences acting against you rather than for you. Although you cannot avoid adversity entirely, not as long as you are participating in life, the awareness of influences from within that rise up in response to influences from without, when kept in the forefront of your mind, eliminates the habitual reactions to certain like-kind adversities that would otherwise keep popping up in your reality. Though viewed as an adversity, such events are often a means of getting your undivided attention to show you that there are weak links in your internal chain in need of modification, alteration or elimination, as the case may be. The truths that surface depends on how deeply the root cause or causes run that brought all the undesirable effects you have been suffering from and probably have been for a very long time.

The distinction between people who can approach adversity with logic and emotional composure and those lacking the ability to respond to adversity logically and without strong emotions, has a lot to do with a person's character, and hence is their constitution. Either your character, such as it is now, will lend itself to easing the impact of an adversity or it will make matters worse. It is important to know that no two people share the same character, given that there are many factors involved in the making of one's character, thus comparing yourself to someone else who has a stronger constitution is futile. Although you are who you are and the way you react to adversity,

given your own level of sensitivity, is the result of many interacting influences as they occur in your day-to-day reality, you are also influenced by events that occurred in a past life or lives, collectively shaping and molding your character from lifetime to lifetime. However, in as much as your character is what it is today, it is not ever carved in stone. Your character can always be altered or changed by acquiring right knowledge and integrating that knowledge into the fabric of your day-to-day reality.

In closing, we hope that in covering the subject of pushing past adversity, you come away from this lesson knowing that adversity, while it certainly has its causes and its very undesirable effects, can be minimized and that the cessation of suffering is possible.

In the spirit of love and enlightenment,

Linda, Z and the Collective We