

Presence

There are two kinds of presence. The one that is a given, when we just are who we are, and the one that we become and access by intention. Becoming present – in this context – is an accessing of our being, amidst distractions and triggers of Self-violation and Self-loathing. Accepting and loving ourselves in the present moment accesses our presence. This is the skill that we are developing: how to return to the present of Self-love as fast as possible when we are in a trance of Self-violating and do it with the least amount of stress and fall out. When we are present - we can rest in it, enjoy it, share it, and take conscious actions.

In the stressed out busy world in which we live, whether you are trying to catch a flight and being screened by security in an airport, riding a train in a crowded subway, waiting for a bus, walking in the street, shopping for food, or in your own home watching the news — you can see it on the faces of people, you can hear it in their voices, you can feel it in your own Self: *stress*.

It's a new brand of stress, of living in the terror of the technologically advanced, yet uncertain world of the post 9/11, 21st century. It's marked by frustration and anxiety, alienation, resignation and violence: “There is not enough time. It's too hard. It's unsafe. It's humiliating. I feel powerless and helpless. Why bother? No one is incharge. Whatever.” Acting out, acting in, reacting, retaliating, Self-exhaustion.

In the body it feels like restlessness and anxiety. The chest is too tight to take in a full breath. The mind is on overload, racing with thoughts. Struggling with our own pace, we tend to respond by either 'losing it' or shutting down. Being human, we naturally try to scan our environment for safety. We seek refuge, we need a break, and a place to rest. We need food to satiate our hunger, and we need to feel real and respected. This is global. It's the common denominator of the human family. The difference is only in style, manner and ways of expression.

We are undergoing major changes globally as well as individually. Technology has enabled us to be informed, know, see and hear in our own living room what's going on anywhere and at any time in the remotest place in the world. This ability is mind-boggling. While it has tremendous benefits, the lack of communication, sense of isolation and alienation so many feel and the global violence and terror we are exposed to compounds our stress and exacerbates the feeling of being trapped. There is really nowhere to run; it follows us everywhere.

There is no safe space ‘out there’ any more. Even in Bali, which was considered a safe haven, there was a terrorist attack. The environment is challenged with global warming. Religiously based conflicts and nuclear disasters are threatening our sense of peace. There is an undeniable darkening of our world. How can we live through these challenging times authentically, with joy, clarity and creativity and without losing ourselves in the stress of living?

We need to learn to respond to life's stress and challenges with calm, reason and awareness. We must not give in to hating, judging and bashing (rejecting) the world, life and ourselves. You see, all loathing is ultimately Self loathing. It is an unconscious trance-like Self destructive dynamic that flares up when we are under pressure.

We need to embrace our full potential by waking up to living in the present, by recognizing the joy of being *now*. It is a natural gift, inherent in all humans, and it is our birthright. The power of the present is within us at all times. It keeps us light, loving, joyful and calm.

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