

A Mantra for Dealing with Life's Annoyances

As I write this, I've come down with a bug (strep throat — yay!), right in the middle of travel, sleep difficulties, big life changes, a workload that's piling high, and more.

As you might imagine, there is a way of seeing all of this as stressful, annoying, difficult, and just generally sucky. I don't see it that way at all, but it's easy to get into that mindset, which means it all becomes that much more stressful.

When you're in a state of stress or tiredness, it can also be easy to get annoyed at little things — the dog barking or construction noises outside, people making rude comments or being late (yet again), tech problems and the state of national politics. Yep, all of these and much more can be super annoying.

But being constantly annoyed isn't good for us. We not only become less happy, we are less pleasant to our loved ones, less open to the world, less devoted to what we care most about, less focused on the important work we're doing in the world.

Maybe we should get people to change, to be less frustrating, more on time for meetings, less inconsiderate! Yes, helping people to make positive changes is a good idea, but *waiting to be happy* until everyone and everything changes to the way you want them to be is a good way to be constantly unhappy and even more frustrated.

Let's not wait until the world changes to be happy.

Instead, let's shift. I'm going to give you a simple practice, and a mantra, for dealing with every single annoyance on Earth.

First, a Simple Practice

When you're annoyed, it's a little pain. OK, sometimes a big pain. It's a hurt that you react to with irritation, frustration or anger.

The first step is to deal with the hurt. And a simple loving-kindness meditation (as corny as that might sound to some of you) is a good healing treatment.

There are longer versions of this meditation, but here's a simple version:

1. Sit still for a moment. Notice the irritation or hurt. Notice how it feels, and stay with that sensation for a moment.
2. Now, with a feeling of genuine kindness and love, say to yourself, "May I find an end to my pain. May I be happy." Try to genuinely wish this for yourself.
3. Repeat it several times, until it feels very genuine. Feel free to repeat it a few more

times if it helps.

If you have a hard time wishing yourself happiness, start with someone who you love unconditionally — picture them in your mind, and send them a genuine wish: “May they find an end to their suffering. May they be happy.” Remember how this genuine wish feels, and then send it to yourself in the same way.

This can take just 10 seconds. And it helps you feel a little less difficulty.

Where Our Annoyance Comes From

Before we get into the mantra, it’s important to understand why we get annoyed in the first place. I know, it’s the other person’s fault, right? They’re being rude, inconsiderate, late, or just plain wrong.

But actually annoyances come from a way of interpreting the world. And it’s not helpful to us most of the time.

Here’s an example: this person is always late. This fact isn’t a problem in itself — it’s a problem because we interpret it that way.

The annoyance comes from a way of seeing this situation: “Their being late is inconsiderate! Why don’t they think of how it’s affecting me? Why can’t they take just a little time to make sure they show up on time, as I have?”

But this way of seeing the situation has a deeper layer that applies to other situations: “When people/the world aren’t how I want them to be, it’s annoying/frustrating/painful/sucky.”

When people don’t act the way we want them to act, we find this painful and frustrating. When the world isn’t the way we want it, we find it frustrating.

As you can imagine, this isn’t helpful. It makes us less happy, it makes us like people (and the world around us) less, it hurts our relationships and our work in the world.

So what we need is a new filter. We’ll accomplish that with a mantra.

A Mantra to Shift the World

The filter of how we see things, explained above, is not helpful. So we need a new one.

A filter of reality I’ve found useful is: **“I celebrate the gorgeous divinity in every person and every thing.”**

Imagine that — every single person is filled with a gorgeous divinity. The entire world,

every object and every being, is filled with the same divinity.

What do I mean by “divinity”? If you’re religious, you already have a meaning of that word, but if you’re not, it can still have a powerful meaning. Even if you’re an atheist, you can see a godlike quality in the trees, the wind, the people you love, cherry blossoms falling to the ground, light filtering into your home in the early morning. There is a divinity in everything around us, if we choose to see and appreciate it.

So create a mantra that reminds you of that fact. Maybe, “Everything is filled with an awesome divinity! Hell yeah!”

Repeat the mantra to yourself during the day. Yell it out if you find a good space to do that. Say it with the enthusiasm it deserves!

The world around us, and every being in it, is filled with a gorgeous divinity that we can celebrate, fall in love with, moment to moment.

Even the rude people — it can be more of a challenge seeing the divinity in someone when they’re being an ass, but you’re up to the challenge. See the good heart underneath their reactivity, the pain underneath their anger, the years of difficulty and stress that have resulted in them being who they are. And then see the beauty in their humanity, the sweetness in the connection between the two of you.

Life shifts when you practice this mantra. People become incredible beings filled with the wonders of the cosmos. Your heart becomes filled with joy and gratitude, and their being late becomes an opportunity to see what a gift it is that they are here with you at all.