

Zen of Busy: Continual Letting Go When You're Overwhelmed

These past two weeks have been hectic and exhausting for me. My wife's father passed away, and I've been in non-stop planning, coordinating, cooking, cleaning, driving around mode.

Yesterday was the funeral, and it was a long, tiring and busy day. Incredibly sad, but busy.

In the midst of this busyness, I've been trying to remember the practice of "continual letting go."

I see it as a Zen practice: whatever you think you know, let go of it. Whatever you are sure of, let go of it. My mantra is: You know nothing. The result is that when I remind myself of this, I try to see things from a fresh perspective. I realize that I think I know something but I don't really, and so I try to see it as if I don't know.

What's the point of this? **By continually letting go, we don't have to be so stressed out.** When we realize we don't know:

- We don't have to be mad when someone is acting in a way we don't like.
- We don't have to have anxiety when we don't know if things will go as planned or hoped.
- We don't have to have all the answers. We can have questions and curiosity instead.
- We don't have to get into a tense "No I'm right" battle with anyone else.
- We don't judge other people as much, so we can be open to who they are and have a good relationship with them.
- We don't have to control things, but can instead just try to be helpful without controlling the outcome.

The benefit of this is that by continually letting go of what I think things should be, of what I think I know, of needing to have control or certainty ... I can just let go and relax. I can do my best, but not stress out about it when things don't go my way.

I don't have to be afflicted by anything. I can be busy, but not afflicted by that busyness. I can be tired, but not afflicted by the fact of my tiredness. I can have things go differently than I planned, but not be afflicted by that fact. The first conditions (busy, tired, things not going as planned) are not always in my control. But I can let go of knowing, and so not be afflicted by any of these conditions. Being afflicted by the conditions of life is what causes our real problems.

So in the midst of tiredness, busyness, chaos ... I try to remember to let go, continually.

When someone comes to me with something unexpected, I try to let go of what I thought the situation was. Then I open up to this new situation, with fresh eyes.

When someone is cross with me or grumpy, I try to let go of how I think they should be acting. And then be curious about why they're acting that way, and love them in the midst of their suffering.

When I'm tired and have a lot to do, I try to let go of the idea that I shouldn't be tired or busy. Then I look at the situation with fresh eyes and realize that I can do these tasks despite the discomfort, out of love for my family.

When things are messy or disorderly, not the way I like them, I try to let go of the way I think things should be. Then I try to see the situation with fresh eyes, understanding that there will always be chaos and mess, and that this too can be loved.

I see that I'm stressed and holding onto the way I want things to be, and so I tell myself I know nothing. And I let go. Then something else comes up and tightness comes up in my body, and I notice this and try to let go. I breathe, smile, and open up. I see things as a beginner. It happens again and again, often from one moment to the next, and I try to continuously let go, let go, let go.

And by letting go of what I know, I'm opening myself up to what's in front of me. This unfolding moment of unexpectedness.

And it is truly magnificent.