

Self-Care in Difficult Situations

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in Canada in March of 2020, it has been a very tough time for most of us. More often than not, we might feel irritated as we find navigating daily life even more challenging. Once we feel angry or frustrated, it might feel impossible to break out of it as we move through the day. It can be hard to understand what happens to your mind when you are in the midst of this kind of day. Eckhart Tolle would probably say that a pain-body has overtaken a person when he/she becomes caught in a downward spiral of negative thinking. The pain-body is like a dark cloud that becomes triggered when something goes "wrong", and it is usually involuntary, automatic and repetitive. It does not fulfill any real purpose, except to create a story of unhappiness within a person.

People can become so absorbed by dark thoughts and ceaseless thinking that they only fall deeper into their negative spirals. As Tolle writes in his book, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, the pain-body is an addiction to unhappiness. It thrives on negative thinking and drama in relationships. It takes a great deal of awareness to see the pain-body in oneself. You may recognize it more easily in others. Once it has engulfed you, you want to make others just as miserable so that you can feed on their negative emotional reactions. The pain-body can be dormant and you may forget it is inside you. Then, something happens that triggers it and the "dark cloud" or "volcano" within you becomes released.

The constant identification with the mind and/or the pain-body prevents individuals from living in the present and enjoying the freedom, peace, joy and aliveness that is always part of the present moment. Only by living in the present can we experience creativity, love or compassion. When you acknowledge the pain-body (which is the negative thinking pattern) within you, give up resistance and live completely in the present, you can begin to dissolve the pain-body. As Tolle says, bringing the light of consciousness to the pain-body, and not fighting it, is the beginning of the end of the pain-body. When you comprehend that the pain-body needs the past or the future in order to continue to thrive, and that it cannot survive in the present moment, it will begin to subside. When you realize that you can choose any thoughts to focus upon, and that you are the "sky" (the holding space) rather than any singular dark cloud of thoughts, you begin to return to your true essence of Being.

Another sign that the pain-body is diminishing is when you begin to realize that the present moment is the true priority because it is the only moment over which we have any power. Only in the present moment can we experience Presence, which is the brief stepping out of the voice in your head, the thought processes, and their reflection in the body as emotion. As Tolle describes, it is the arising of inner spaciousness where before there was the clutter of thought and the turmoil of emotion. There can be a true coming together with another person. In the stillness of Presence, you can sense the formless essence in yourself and the other person as one. According to Tolle, knowing the oneness of yourself and the other is true love, true care, true compassion.

So, the next time you are having one of those difficult days, take one minute to be in the present moment. You do not have to judge it or like it. All you need to do is to be present to it. Acknowledge the negative thinking pattern within you, and realize that you do not have to engage in it. Take a deep breath or two. Appreciate that you have a whole array of choices before you, and that it is just one of them. Recognize your need for negativity, and let it go. Allow it to dissolve. Remember that you are the sky in a myriad of thoughts, and focus on being fully in the present moment.

Go with the challenge, the annoyance, the "issue", or whatever is going wrong. Deal with it, and move on to the next moment remembering that you choose how each one unfolds. By remaining present and open rather than closed to the possibilities of the day, you just might find that your "bad" day turns around due to the more positive energy that you tap into and create. After all, we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel now that more people have been vaccinated for COVID-19 and the number of cases has been decreasing. Instead of remaining angry or fearful about what is going to happen, even with unexpected changes remember that you can open yourself up to give and receive more love in all its forms.