

PEACE OF MIND ON A DAILY BASIS

by Deb Elkin, LPC

A few weeks ago I stopped into one of my favorite small book stores. I'd been feeling quite lost lately and I was looking for something to read that might inspire me, might speak to me, might help me move through this place, or at least understand it better. Nancy, the owner of the store, scanned her bookshelves and went fairly quickly to "The Power of Now" by Eckhart Tolle. She told me two people who had read it had told her it had been life transforming for them. That sounded pretty good to me!

Although I'm not even half way through the book, in its own quiet, almost subtle way, it actually is feeling life transforming to me. It is bringing me peace of mind on an almost daily basis - it hopefully will be daily when I remember to pay more attention.

I am learning that we have a choice in how we respond to the situations and events that present themselves to us on a daily basis. We tend to label things as "problems" and that keeps them very much on our minds both in the present and usually well into the future too. It takes up much of our time and energy, thinking, worrying. We often get very attached to our problems and have a hard time letting go of them. Needless to say, when we do that, it takes us away from our ability to enjoy ourselves and our lives right now .

But when life events present themselves to us, we can also see them as "situations." And when we have situations, we can deal with them now, or we can leave them alone, put them aside, and just accept them as part of what is, until they change, or until they can be dealt with. In this way, a situation can be put aside, whereas a problem stays with us and often takes us over.

Tolle puts out an interesting challenge. "Focus your attention on the Now and tell me what problem you have at this moment." Stop and think about that, what problem you have in THIS moment. When you narrow it down to "this moment" (which is truly all we ever really have), not tomorrow or thirty minutes from now, do you have a problem, right now?

Chances are, if you are honest, and if you can let go, the answer will be "no" much or even most of the time. And if the answer is yes, reframe it to the paradigm of having a situation that needs to be handled. Then decide if there is anything you can do right now. If not, let it go, come back to the moment, and enjoy yourself!

This is what feels life changing for me. On a regular basis, several times throughout each day, I have been asking myself, "Do I have a problem right now, right this second?" The answer has been "no" almost every single time! What a sense of freedom it is bringing me, over and over again! Every time I feel a sense of angst or dis-ease, I ask myself that question, and when I realize there is no problem, right now, I find myself taking a deep breath and relaxing. If there is something going on, I either pay attention and see what it is I can do to handle it right now, or I breathe it away, to be handled later when I can really do something about it or do need to think about it.

I find myself appreciating myself and life so much more. There's much more space for gratitude. I remember to smile at the flowers and blue sky and warm spring air. I unknit my brow. I breathe deeper. I am much more peaceful these days and I can't tell you how good that feels! Please remember, I'm not saying there aren't things that cause me grief or angst, and there are certainly things that need to be attended to. But when I handle them as I can and need to instead of dwelling on them as "problems", they don't take me over and I have much more ease and peace of mind in my life. I encourage you to try it!

copyright © 2007 Deb Elkin