

Everything is All Right

How do people deal with stress? Sometimes we use addictions to distract us, and they can make us feel OK for a while. If we abuse them, though, they can make us feel worse. Other techniques, like psychological, religious, or spiritual practices, work better. The *Everything is All Right* technique is one of these.

Understanding Suffering

Most people can tell you why everything is *not* all right. And within the context of their stories, they are probably right. Humans suffer. Anyone with a drop of compassion would have to agree.

Suffering is the existential experience or psychological perception of a lack of well-being: Everything is not all right. As such, we experience this on the physical and psychological levels.

Physical pain is obvious: when something injures our body, nerve endings send impulses to the brain: "Warning, something is wrong!" We hurt. Pain is the body insisting that we make it right.

Psychological pain is more complex and is often based on imaginary assumptions, but it can hurt just as much. We suffer like this when we believe that something is threatening us. Usually, our animal instincts are to blame. These are the body's biological demands to survive, mate, gain or maintain a hierarchical position, and have territory. The kernel that all of them share is the fear of loss.

Instincts

Let's look at the survival instinct first. If someone were trying to kill us — a real threat to our survival — we would experience fear or terror. We could feel the same (to a lesser degree) if we believed that we'd soon lose our job, because our job relates to survival. The mating instinct creates stress when we suspect that our partner might leave us, and this spawns the dark emotion of jealousy. Not having a mate can cause suffering as well.

Hierarchical positioning is about our rank in the pecking order. If someone threatens any facet of our social status, we react either offensively or defensively. This can happen at home, at work, or in the community. Our built-in need for territory — a place to live — can make us worry too. We have to secure and protect our space.

These instincts are like buttons. When circumstances push them, our body and brain alert us that everything is not all right. This doesn't hurt physically in the sense of having damaged body parts, but these emotions are disturbing. If they are chronic, they can make us sick.

Mechanisms

Bio-chemicals are substances that our body pumps into our bloodstream whenever we perceive a threat. Their original function was (and often still is) to help us survive and prosper. A bad feeling means that we're doing something wrong. A good feeling means that we're doing something right. However, feelings don't always reflect our best interests. This is because (1) psychological factors are at play and are often out of touch with reality, (2) society and technology have advanced since our bodies developed these instincts millions of years ago, and (3) we, as a race, may be approaching a collective advance in consciousness.

Plus, there's an additional factor: artificially induced emotional responses. Politicians generate these in their followers whenever they want to drum up support for their agendas. They create or distort issues and manipulate the public's feelings.

These factors have made many historically correct responses counterproductive. To avoid having our body release these substances, we need to understand and then override the psychological mechanisms that trigger them. And we have many. For instance, our body can release them when we remember a bad experience from years ago, or when we *imagine* that something bad *might* happen in the future!

Why Suffer?

Religions explain why we suffer. Buddhism says that life is suffering and a cure exists ("Don't be attached"). Some claim that life is a test and that suffering is part of it. Others say that it's an illusion like everything else. Religions also provide ways to deal with it. And although their methods work somewhat, none are universal. If they were, everyone would belong to that religion, because all of us seek happiness and an end of suffering. It would be "The Answer."

Happiness, Spirit, and Soul

In human terms, happiness is the absence of suffering. When our bodies and minds aren't nagging us that something is wrong, then we feel at peace. Although people aren't usually at peace these days, it is the natural state of spirit. The spiritual body lacks the instinctual triggers and bio-chemicals that make humans miserable, so it can't suffer like we do. Some cultures, though, believe in hungry ghosts or tormented souls. If they do exist, then we need to redefine our multidimensional self. For example, some ancient religions believed that we have more than one spiritual aspect, like a spirit *and* a soul. In this case, spirit would be the one beyond suffering and we would identify with that.

Alternately, because humans are innately concerned about justice, we could have invented the idea of suffering souls. It assures us that although we see injustice in the world, God or some universal force will make the culprits answer for what they've done. Whatever the truth is, we have to pick "our truth" and take it on faith. (To have faith is to commit to a belief.) We can't turn to science for proof, because it can't measure the extremes of material reality much less the spiritual realm.

Yet Another Spiritual Technique

Everything is All Right is a psycho-metaphysical technique based on spiritual principles. It has five premises, and the first is that spiritual reality exists. Linked to this is the second, which says that we are an integrated and inseparable part of that reality.

The third premise defines a person's true identity as "his or her highest, individualized spiritual aspect": We are immortal spirits in constant communion with God. Although our physical self may be real, spirit is more real. The physical is a subset of the spiritual.

The fourth premise is that our true spiritual self is beyond fear and suffering. Here, we need to clarify a few things.

This idea contradicts most religious dogma. They claim that our spiritual self can suffer like we do. In the "Everything Is All Right" model, suffering can only happen in a finite setting. Spirit, though, dwells in infinity.

Second, this premise is not a nihilistic excuse to act irresponsibly. "If everything is all right, then I can do whatever I want." To think that it is, is to take it out of context. Concerning our actions, the big picture is that this reality is ethical, and we should do what is right.

Finally, this idea is not a substitute for common sense. For example, say you are sightseeing at the base of an erupting volcano. Lava is creeping towards you. You don't stand there thinking, "Everything is all right." You move out of the way.

The fifth premise is that psychological pain and discomfort manifest in the body.

How It Works

"Everything is All Right" works like this. Say that someone insults you — a challenge to your status. You clench your jaw. You feel angry as fight-or-flight chemicals rush through your veins. Everything is not all right. As you feel the anger expressing itself in your jaw, take the words "Everything is all right." Project them onto that spot. Keep doing it until you have a better perspective of the situation. Then ask, "What's not right?" Try to find what's triggering that response. Be honest. Usually, the ego is demanding something.

There's an advanced version too. Instead of applying those *words* to the affected spot, you extract and apply the *energy* of the phrase. Once you master the technique, you can use the energy in many helpful ways, including applying it to the chakras.

Doing this doesn't suppress our emotions. Eventually, that could make matters worse: emotions are energy, and we should express them. What is important is that we act consciously and present them in non-harmful ways, if possible. Express them lovingly — even anger. The key here is "if possible." Emotions come in all degrees, from mild to manic. During an emotional blowout, being nice just isn't possible (unless you're very spiritually advanced).

Some will argue that we need to express all anger as is — without any "love filters." Tyranny exists at all levels, and we need anger to keep it in line. Maybe that's true. When it's successful, it does provide a short-term solution. Yet, anger and violence haven't stopped tyranny and oppression; it has only countered the despots (the forms) that express them. Maybe that's enough. The question is: Is tyranny a permanent feature of human nature, or can we evolve beyond it? If the former is true, then it's reasonable to continue being angry and violent. But if the latter is true (that the human race can evolve spiritually), then a better solution probably exists. As the Dalai Lama put it, "Anger or hatred is like a fisherman's hook. It is very important for us to ensure that we are not caught by it."

Transcending

Psychologically, the point of this technique is to convince the brain that although the threat *might* be real, it has no ultimate effect on our spiritual self. If you catch it in time, then it won't trigger the chemical dump, or at least it will turn off the faucet or reduce the flow. This effectively counters the body's auto-response system. It's possible that this practice and those like it help shape the evolutionary course of humanity, which includes our physical and psychological makeup. We would be acting as evolutionary agents, nudging the species forward.

If we could maintain a state of consciousness where we wouldn't identify with these bio-chemical reactions, then we would be happy even when our body was feeling bad. Here, we would be giving the Everything-Is-All-Right reality more weight than the bio-chemical reality. Theoretically, if we could fully embody the former reality, then we would be living like immortals, but being well aware of the passing nature of forms, including our own. At this point in human evolution, this state is extremely difficult to reach fully. You would be transcending fear, anger, envy, and the rest. People do progress, though, so you could expect some degree of progress.

For instance, the first plateau of this practice is when you are conscious of a bio-chemical "feel bad" message. Let's say a sense of dread comes over you. Instead of unconsciously accepting it and becoming afraid, you think, "Chemicals are creating bad feelings. I feel bad because I'm identifying with them. Stupid chemicals."

In a way, this is akin to "loving your dark side": Before we can change internally, we need to be aware of the problem. By avoiding the grip of the automated bio-message, we're free to dig and discover what the trigger is. That's why we ask our brain, "What's not all right?"

Lastly, this practice can lead to a deeper understanding of surrender. Surrendering to the universe (or God's will or spirit) doesn't imply hopelessness, helplessness, the dominance of fate, or becoming inactive in life. It teaches us to act, but to remain unattached to the outcome of our actions. This idea is standard in many religions and can make us happy more often. It transforms fate into destiny and destiny into the fulfillment of purpose.

Conclusion

Is everything really all right? From any number of existential and religious viewpoints, the answer is a resounding No. From some spiritual viewpoints, the answer is a soft but sure Yes. And it's possible that both are true. If this is the case, then we can choose which reality will rule our life in the moment.