

# ACCEPTANCE -

## LIBERATION FROM THE UNPREDICTABLE



One of the most misunderstood words perhaps in our lives is "acceptance". We say that it is difficult to accept adversity, but it is an astonishing reality that many a time we do not even accept the beauty and seamlessness in our life.

We yearn for a change in our life that is dying within, and when that moment of blessing touches us, when a person or a situation graces our experience of life, we are not able to accept it. It feels too good to be true. How is it possible? I am feeling different but maybe I am just fooling myself. This is perhaps just my imagination. How can something that I lived with for so long change. I don't think it is real - this is what many of us tell ourselves when life turns around. In the non-acceptance of something new, even if it is a change for the better, we hold on to the old pain much tighter than we embrace the newly found freedom, thinking that if hope is built on this new experience, we might have to face disappointment, God forbid this new change were to be real. We are caught in the doubt so completely that we doubt even our own experience. For those who have gone through a long period of misery in their life, it becomes difficult to accept anything good. It is ironical sometimes that the better the possibility of a good life, the greater the doubt and suspicion in our outlook towards that possibility.

## This brings us to a question - why do we doubt our own e x p e r i e n c e ?

There are two important feelings human beings recognize - love and fear. We might think the opposite of love is hate, but if we really look deeper, you would know that the other side of love is actually the fear that emanates as hate in action. Fear creates a defense so that we are not harmed. That defense is called doubt which shields one from the uncertainty of life. Doubt brings predictability to life in our mind. Fear is an emotion of survival. It automatically changes into settled assurance as we are accepted by the environment. Evolution has brought a strange distortion in this equation of life. Human beings have gone far away from Love, and have clung on to the Fear as the ruling instinct of life. Love has become a convoluted experience of convenience, comfort and expectations. The unpredictable and unknown nature of life is looked at with fear and doubt.



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We know that life was not supposed to be predictable or convenient. Infact the term 'supposed to be' was not supposed to be at all when applied to life. Life is an experience and it is unique to everyone - as unique as they are. It just flows from one moment to another based on choices of an individual that gives reality to that experience. There is much more to life than the mere rationale of mind. There is a cause behind every happening that many times is beyond our conscious understanding. The only way to know is to experience. The only way to experience is to accept.

Having gone away from this reality, human beings have started expecting life to go the way they imagine or dream of. Right from our childhood, we are taught certain do's and don'ts, should's and shouldn'ts, this-is-how-it-is, this-is-how-it-is-supposed-to-be about life. Rarely are we prepared to be unprepared for the unknown-ness of life. We are not even aware that accepting is a choice that we can make.

For instance, parents who have children with special needs not only have to deal with the child, but have to deal with the disappointment of their own failed expectations around their own life. They bear more and overcome more every day than is humanly conceivable. Surely, it's not easy when the diagnosis comes with a definitive affirmation that your child is not OK. It's this loss a person is unable to bear and accept a child with limitations instead of a child they believed they had. Most parents are given a rundown on what to expect or rather what are the things they cannot expect. It's a hard road for them, but they come to terms with it. Many parents who reached Aashwasan arrived in this state. In the first conversation with them, we ask what their expectations or the goals for their children are. And they say that they have accepted the child completely and that they would be happy if the child can do the basics. If they could be independent in their daily living that should be sufficient. It takes months and sometimes years for the parents to be led to a point to understand that what they call acceptance is actually giving up. When the child was diagnosed, the loss was so profound that the parents assumed that there were many things that their kids would never do. They stopped looking for capabilities and focused on fixing weaknesses. The hope for possibilities is replaced by searching for solutions to fix the problem. For those parents this is acceptance. However, this is not real acceptance.

If we have accepted a situation because there is no choice or a way out, we can be sure that we have actually resigned. In reality what we have done is, we have stopped every opportunity that comes into our life as part of nature's giving. Life starts moving in a direction that takes one on the track of desperation, frustration, guilt, confusion and hopelessness. It can skin life of its worth and hope. E.g., the very children whose lives we look forward to discover, start looking like a 'curse' that will not allow us to move ahead in our individual lives. Expectations turn into disappointments. Life looks different from that of others. We become isolated. Problem becomes locus and life loses focus.

There are some parents who feel the pain of shattered dreams, nevertheless come to terms with the fact that their child is a child and have the capacity to live, survive and thrive. Their lives may not be like other peoples' lives but will be on their own terms. They don't perceive their child as a bunch of positives and negatives; they see him/her as a whole, with everything being a part of that whole. They realize that their life is not going to be what they expected it to be and that it will definitely not follow the norm. They are then able to look forward confidently into an unknown future. This is acceptance. Acceptance is really about embracing what is right in front of you. And when one does that, there is a possibility to respond to that situation organically. When parents truly accept the situation, they realize that their child is much bigger than the problem. The child has a problem; the problem does not have the child. So one starts focusing on what is rather than fixing what is not.

However this is not just about special needs; it is true for everyone. This is really about - Do we accept others? Are we accepting of our situations? And most importantly, do we accept ourselves?

With acceptance comes the experience of how we feel about what's happening. When we experience, is when we know what the issue is. Usually, the problems we face in life have half the answers. As we experience, we know. We know the problem with absolute clarity. Knowing the problem leads to a solution. And where there is solution, there is hope.

The consequence of true acceptance is not abject helplessness and dejection; it is hope and empowerment because true acceptance puts people in control of the situation. There is always something one can do to impact the situation and change it. This acceptance opens up diverse and varied avenues that most of the time is more unique and beautiful than the normal. This is hopeful. But if accepting one's situation feels like the end of the road, it might actually mean that one has given up. If acceptance leads to a new world view, opens new doors and windows, and one feels that the end of the road was really just a blind turn, then you are probably on the right path.



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*"Love is where it begins..."*

*Rashmi*