

Resistance

“Acceptance is not submission; it is acknowledgment of the facts of a situation.

Then deciding what you're going to do about it.”

– Kathleen Casey Theisen, author and motivator

How could a child be anything but perfect? As Laura sat in the near darkness watching her four-year-old son sleep, she was plagued with questions. Recently, Laura had received results from a battery of tests carried out on her son. The assessment was conducted to find out why his physical and emotional development was not in keeping with other children his age. Almost from birth, there had been indications – hints, if you like – that something was not quite right.

Though Laura had little doubt the assessment would confirm her worst fears, the news was still heartbreaking. At first, she felt angry, singled out and victimized. She was a good person – certainly a good mother. She was moral, ethical, worked hard at her job and even found time to volunteer in her community. Why then had this happened to her son? Somehow, it just didn't seem fair. Yet, here she was, forced to face the reality that life as she knew it – life as she had expected it to unfold – would not be happening and the struggles were only beginning. The assessment carried an unsettling prediction that her son would likely be learning impaired.

It was while sitting alone in the bedroom with her sleeping child that Laura had an awakening – what some might call a quantum moment: an experience of intense clarity and profound understanding. It was in that moment, declared Laura, that she realized her son was not flawed but rather perfect unto himself. Laura realized that it was unfair and unnecessary to compare him to other children – even to his own siblings. Her suffering had been the result of a need for her son to be the same as other children – to be free of the challenges he (and she in turn) now faced. It was clearly apparent to Laura that acceptance, rather than resistance to the situation, would provide the only effective means by which to move through it.

Laura's quantum moment revealed to her a profound truth: the first step in dealing effectively with any challenging situation is to step out of resistance to it. As long as we are resisting the situation, we are wasting valuable energy that could be used for effective problem-solving.

Acceptance is not resignation. Acceptance does not involve permissiveness, passiveness or meekness. Acceptance does not mean that we like or willingly tolerate an unacceptable situation. It does mean that we acknowledge a situation for what it is. Acceptance allows us to move through a given event while fully acknowledging its existence. With acceptance comes clarity, and with clarity comes the ability to devise a viable strategy based on what is actually happening rather than what we would prefer. Acceptance is always the first action step.

When locked in a state of resistance, we're constantly questioning what's happened to us and battling thoughts without resolution. We are searching for the black and white – a plain and simple answer to the question of why. The “why” keeps possibilities at arm's length.

An internal dialogue of resistance contains statements such as “If only I had known,” “If only I had done something differently,” or “If only I had the chance to go back and do it again.” Acceptance allows us to get to a place where we can live with the precariousness of the situation. Unless we are willing to accept the situation at hand for what it is, we cannot expect to be open to forgiveness or healing, which are important to restoring a state of equilibrium.

Here's one way to think about it: everything that we experience brings with it a tool that we may use to create a better life. Yes, especially the tough stuff. If we think about it, some of our most profound insights and reliable tools for healing and change came into our possession through uncomfortable and painful times. A simple perceptual shift can allow us to move from resistance into acceptance and even curiosity about what tools each event may bring.

In order to shift from resistance to acceptance, we must be willing to feel our feelings. It is during those times that we most want to be numb that we must bring awareness into our bodies. This “feeling through” process allows us to contact the source of resistance and move systematically through it. Instead of “numbing out” and trying to run away from something that will always catch us in the end, take some time (as did Laura) to sit in silence. Breathe and release your need for things to be anything other than what they are. You may be surprised at what comes to mind. Perhaps, like Laura, you too will have a quantum moment.

Polish-born American composer and pianist Arthur Rubinstein wrote, “Of course there is no formula for success except perhaps an unconditional acceptance of life and what it brings.”

Resistance is the opposite of acceptance. When Laura accepted the reality of the situation, she was able to begin putting into place an action plan to deal with the issue. That could never have happened had she remained burdened by the perceived “unfairness” of the situation or in resistance to it. Laura sought out professional assistance in dealing with her son’s learning disabilities and learned that many apparent disabilities can be challenged and some even overcome completely with the right combination of acceptance, persistence and professional help.

To learn more about learning disabilities and the programs available, visit the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta – Red Deer Branch website at www.LDRedDeer.ca