

What You Resist, Persists

- Depth psychologist Carl Jung contended that “what you resist not only persists, but will grow in size.”
- Resistance micro and macro, experience
- The Buddha’s teaching: Resistance = suffering. The second Noble Truth - there is a cause for our stress, our suffering
- touchpoints to the Eight fold path - 4th Noble Truth
 - Mindfulness of Feelings (Vedanā) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta
 - Resistance to anattā

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness.

— *Majjhima Nikāya 19, Two Kinds of Thought*

So he feels two pains, physical & mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows; in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental.

— Saṃyutta Nikāya 36.6, Sallatha Sutta (The Arrow)

**The discerning person, learned,
doesn't sense a (mental) feeling of pleasure or pain:
This is the difference in skillfulness
between the sage & the person run-of-the-mill.**

**For a learned person
who has fathomed the Dhamma,
clearly seeing this world & the next,
desirable things don't charm the mind,
undesirable ones bring no resistance.**

His acceptance

& rejection are scattered,

gone to their end,

do not exist.

Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,

he discerns rightly,

has gone, beyond becoming,

to the Further Shore.

— Saṃyutta Nikāya 36.6, Sallatha Sutta (The Arrow)

Mindfulness of Feeling

- Itivuttaka 52
- This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “Monks, there are these three feelings. Which three? A feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings.”

Mindfulness of Feeling

Centered,
alert,
mindful,
the Awakened One's
disciple
discerns feelings,

how feelings come into
play,
where they cease,
& the path to their ending.
With the ending of
feelings, a monk
free from hunger
is totally unbound.

90-Second Rule (Neuroscience)

- Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor is a Harvard-trained neuroanatomist renowned for her unique insights into brain function, particularly concerning emotional processing. Her prominence rose following her TED Talk and her book, *My Stroke of Insight*, where she recounted her personal experience of a stroke and the subsequent revelations about brain hemispheric functions.
- Emotion lasts ~90 seconds biologically.
- Anything beyond = mental continuation.
- Buddhism: Pause after vedanā (feeling tone) to avoid reactivity.

Irony Process Theory: Why Resistance Fuels Obsession

- Concept by Daniel Wegner: Attempting to suppress a thought makes it more persistent.
- Classic example: "Don't think of a white bear"—you think of it more.
- Suppressing emotional content or cravings (like "don't eat candy") increases mental preoccupation.
- Sources:
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironic_process_theory
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/more-than-a-feeling/202304/intrusive-thoughts-dont-stare-at-the-pink-elephant>

Limbic Friction: Emotional Resistance to Change

- Coined by Dr. Andrew Huberman: The struggle between emotional drives and rational goals.
- Limbic system (emotion) resists change; prefrontal cortex (reason) pushes for it.
- Friction explains why starting new habits or letting go is hard.
- Sources:
- <https://www.hubermanlab.com/newsletter/build-or-break-habits-using-science-based-tools>
- <https://www.re-origin.com/articles/limbic-friction-overcoming-challenges>

Resist the Urge?

- What about habit change?
- Urge surfing
- Aren't we resisting an urge?
- The urge itself is a form of resistance. A craving for something to bring temporary peace or pleasure or even other emotional rushes, even pain
- Surfing the urge we are letting go
- Allowing the craving, aversion, feeling to pass
- Choosing a skillful action allowing the urge and responding from a place of greater freedom

Spiritual Bypassing?

- Breathwork and meditation = clarity, not escape. Tenderizing body and mind to accept insight, not resist it
- term coined by psychologist John Welwood in the early 1980s
- curiosity: What is truthfully needed here?
- Apology? Letting go? Loving boundary?
- Consult with teacher, mentor, trusted friends
- Are you resisting a needed action?
- Or are you resisting letting go of unnecessary pain or guilt?
- Continue to cultivate discernment

Social Resistance & Justice

- The word Resistance with a capital R
- How do we cultivate effective activism with an open and loving heart?
- Not embracing and fueled by aversion and ill-will

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal.”

— Dhammapada 5 - Thanissaro (dhammatalks.org)

"The essence of nonviolence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics, and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally.

Nonviolence is not a dogma; it is a process [...] Nonviolent action born of the awareness of suffering and nurtured by love, is the most effective way to confront adversity."

— Excerpt from Thich Nhat Hanh's book **Love in Action**

Thich Nhat Hanh: To meditate means to go home to yourself. Then you know how to take care of the things that are happening inside you, and you know how to take care of the things that happen around you. All meditation exercises are aimed at bringing you back to your true home, to yourself. Without restoring your peace and calm and helping the world to restore peace and calm, you cannot go very far in the practice.

— This Is the Buddha's Love (interview posted on PlumVillage.org)

Melvin McLeod: What is the difference between this true self, the self you come home to, and how we normally think of ourselves?

Thich Nhat Hanh: True self is non-self, the awareness that the self is made only of non-self elements. There's no separation between self and other, and everything is interconnected. Once you are aware of that you are no longer caught in the idea that you are a separate entity.

— This Is the Buddha's Love (interview posted on PlumVillage.org)

Letting go of resistance

- Embracing clear, confident, selfless and compassionate action, effortless effort, pathless path
- As we learn to let go in all the big and small ways, internally and externally following the Eight Fold Path, we finally lose our resistance to selflessness. Our actions are not formed by our clinging or resistance. We don't need to cling to a sense of self for security. We are at home in our awakened state.

Conclusion

- Resistance is a source of stress and suffering
- Mindfulness of feeling
- The Eight Fold path gives us ways to let go
- Using discernment we are open to arising insights and need for right action
- The Three Jewels of sangha, dharma, the buddha (or mentor/teacher) can help us see clearly
- Transformation towards a loving consciousness internally and externally in the world is not fueled by aversion, resistance, ill-will. It is fueled by clear seeing, equanimity and right action.