

Finding calm

Life is a storm. It is dramatic, tumultuous and unpredictable. Every day brings new challenges, new obstacles and new opportunities. That isn't a bad thing – it is what makes life interesting and stops us from stagnating - but it can sometimes feel very overwhelming. We all need the ability to retreat at times to a place of stillness...to find calm within the storm. Just as with a weather storm, the calm lies at the eye of the storm...within you. To find true stillness and peace and be able to access it whenever you need to you must find the calm within yourself.

As with the weather, the storm of life will vary in intensity from moment to moment, and it will have times of tranquillity that enable you to recover and recharge. But you can never be certain when the next of those moments is going to arrive - how long will the fury of the storm rage before it grants you respite again? Nor do you know when that respite is granted how long it will last.

In the same way that you ensure you have the necessary tools to protect yourself against stormy weather, such as clothing and shelter, so must you ensure that you have the necessary tools to protect yourself against the storms of life. You must create mechanisms to shield and places of shelter within yourself. In this way you create your own calm and build resilience against the uncertainties and volatility of life.

You create shields and shelter for yourself by learning to go within: to withdraw into yourself when chaos reigns around you. It takes time, patience and practise to develop this ability. Start by practising withdrawing into yourself at times when you are at peace. Find a quiet place to sit and still your mind. Focus on your breathing, then on feeling sensations within your body. Don't think about how you feel, just notice it. Allow yourself to appreciate the miracle that is your body. Feel the life in every part of you. Centre yourself in your heart. Feel it beating. Feel its strength – how it provides life to your body. Sense your inner self, your soul. Feel the love and light at the core of your being. Feel them radiate out and surround you. See yourself bathed in this light. Allow this to centre and calm you.

Adopt this as a regular practise when you are at peace and gradually you will find yourself able to use this technique to centre yourself when faced with stress and turmoil. Again practise on the relatively minor stresses to start with and work your way up to life's truly challenging events. Sometimes you may be able to do this where and when the stress occurs, just gently draw within for a few seconds to find your centre and peace, but sometimes you may have to excuse yourself from the situation to be able to use the technique effectively. Notice how even just being aware of this technique will help you moderate your responses to stressful situations. Even if you can't fully find peace within at a given moment knowing it is there helps to soothe you.

This ability to find calm within yourself will really come into its own when you are faced with one of life's major challenges. It probably won't protect you entirely from an emotional buffeting but it will help you manage and reduce the impacts. Those times will also be the ones when you will find out just how far you have progressed in your development of this skill!