



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 054 – Wellness Wednesday: Allowing It All
July 14, 2021

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Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

Hello and welcome to Episode 54. Thanks so much for joining me for the shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

In Episode 53, I gave an overview of Tara Brach's new book, *Trusting the Gold, Uncovering Your Natural Goodness*, where she explores how to break the Trance of Unworthiness by practicing non-judgment, self-compassion and connection.

There's a particular experience she shares that helped me frame a challenge I've been working through the last few years. I'll share her story along with a practice that you might find helpful when dealing with difficult emotions.

So sit back, take a nice long breath to ground yourself in presence and let's get started.

In her book, *Trusting the Gold, Uncovering Your Natural Goodness*, author and meditation teacher, Tara Brach, tells a story from 2003 when the US was on the brink of



war with Iraq. Every time she looked at a newspaper, she would feel her anger rise. And as it rose, she was aware that the hostility she was feeling was itself a form of violence.

Ironically, at the time, her book, *Radical Acceptance, Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha*, was just released. And her students were asking her how the idea of radical acceptance and seeking change in the world could coexist. In trying to find an answer to her students' questions and trying to work through her own intense emotions, she came up with an inventive practice to stay engaged in the world while working with her emotional response. She called it The Newspaper Meditation.

Each morning, she would read a bit of the newspaper and pause, noticing her reaction, what she thought and how she felt. And she let those thoughts and feelings be. "Let it all be here," she said, "let all these feelings belong."

Then she would dig deeper. What was behind those angry thoughts and feelings that would rise up? She identified fear and then she would sit with it. Going deeper, she would ask, "What's behind the fear?" And it was grief for the inevitable suffering. And then she would just sit with it. Going deeper, she would ask "What's behind the grief?" And she found deep care for all beings in harm's way - ah, that tender place - and then she would sit with it.

But the practice didn't end there. This wasn't meant to be a passive act, but rather a mindful response. Over time, she found she was able to hold this deep care in the world as she took action to protest the war, resulting in peaceful civil disobedience and arrest. But by following her own advice, and allowing the difficult emotions like anger and frustration to be there, and accepting them without judgment, she was able to bring compassion and wisdom into the world with the intent of spurring positive change.



Tara took this practice a step further in her writing and teaching when she popularized a Buddhist practice called R.A.I.N., which is an acronym that stands for Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture.

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I love these practices, whether The Newspaper Meditation or R.A.I.N., because they don't mask challenging emotions. There's no spiritual bypass here. Quite the contrary. These practices give us a way to mindfully Allow It All while working *through* difficult emotions.

And speaking of mindful, Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is an author and meditation teacher, developed the Seven Attitudes for Mindfulness, which can also be helpful.

The Seven Attitudes for Mindfulness are:

1. **Non-judging:** letting each moment be just what it is, without labeling it as “good” or “bad”
2. **Patience:** letting your life unfold in its own time and way
3. **Beginner's mind:** seeing everything as if for the first time
4. **Trust:** feeling confident about your ability to learn from observing your experience
5. **Non-striving:** backing off from striving for results
6. **Acceptance:** seeing things as they actually are in the present, moment by moment, and
7. **Letting go:** putting aside the tendency to cling to some experiences and reject others.



Jon has since added two more qualities to the recent addition of his classic book, *Full Catastrophe Living, Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness*, which I'll link in the show notes. The additions are **Gratitude** and **Generosity**, meant to remind us to acknowledge and enhance the importance of our interconnectedness. He also reminds us that you don't have to remember all nine. When you mindfully practice one of the attitudes, you practice them all by default.

So with these two concepts in mind, Allowing It All and the Mindfulness Attitudes, here are the steps I work through when I feel dissonance between my inner and outer worlds. The whole process takes between five and ten minutes, and it helps me take responsibility for what I'm feeling while channeling and shifting my energy in a useful way. Perhaps you'll find it helpful the next time you're working through challenging emotions.

1. With a non-judging and non-striving mindful attitude, try to identify and acknowledge the challenging emotion that you're feeling. Give it a name: anger, disappointment, jealousy. This helps to pause the story, which is the thoughts about the emotion that can sometimes swirl endlessly in our mind. And it also helps to shift our awareness to what's actually happening in the present moment and just be with it.
2. With an accepting and patient mindful attitude, drop into your body and sense how the emotion feels. Do you feel a constriction around your throat or a heaviness in your chest? Maybe an activated solar plexus or perhaps an overall achy feeling? Be with that feeling and remind yourself that it's not permanent - the feeling can and will shift.
3. With a mindful attitude of letting go, begin to dialogue with the emotion. Now that you've named and located the emotion in your body, try to get a sense of what



the emotion needs (such as acknowledgement), or what it needs you to know (perhaps there's a need for better boundaries), or what would ease it (maybe a heartfelt discussion with a loved one or an in depth journaling session just to get it all out). To begin to let it go, take a few mindful breaths with a focus on a long outbreath. As you take in the in-breath, say to yourself, "I allow" and on the outbreath say, "I let go."

4. With a mindful attitude of trust and beginner's mind, get curious and offer the difficult emotion love and compassion. Note any shifts.

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Most of all, remember that this is a practice. Trust that you're right where you need to be at this moment in time. Keep gratitude in your heart for an opportunity to learn and see the world with fresh eyes, as well as the generosity of grace for yourself and others as you begin again.

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

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Until next time, be well!