

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY
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I made my living doing sit-down astrology readings with clients for many years. I still do readings, but mostly for friends and acquaintances these days. I am just too busy running a company to have the time anymore, but I still like to do them.

One thing that comes up in many readings is what do we do when something really devastating happens to us in our lives, like losing our job, our life savings, our partner, or what-have-you? These kind of events happen all too often, and to almost everyone at some time in our lives – a really big setback. It has happened to me, for sure – big time.

Or perhaps we do something just awful that we really didn't mean to do, something we can't just undo. It just happened and before we knew it the toothpaste was out of the tube and we could not put it back. This kind of event also leaves a big imprint. What to do when we make mistakes?

People that I have counseled seem to spend an inordinate amount of time feeling depressed and bad about what has happened to them. For some, it becomes the main theme for the rest of their lives, with much regret, bitterness, anger, and the like. It takes on a life of its own and it takes their life, what they have left of it.

It is the same thing with big gaffs or mistakes. Folks dwell on them and often for a long, long time. They are preoccupied with their mistake, humiliation, or loss. I hear this again and again in astrology readings.

Before I comment on any of this, I want to link my suggestions to a topic I have been trying to get across to readers for years with not much success and that is "mind training." I hesitate to use the word "meditation" because either it is misunderstood or people quickly replace what I mean by that word with their own explanation. I guess what I am saying here is please hear me out on this with an open mind, a fresh take.

Ultimately I want to point out to you how practicing meditation affects how we take these big road bumps that life sometimes puts in our way, and it is not as simple as meditation practice makes us more peaceful or accepting. Of course it does, but that is not my point here.

In basic meditation we practice focusing on our breath, or a pebble, a spot on the floor, etc. It does not matter what the object is. The point of meditation practice is to let our mind rest and focus on whatever object we have chosen and not let it stray from that. This is easier said than done, of course, and here is the view:

In meditation practice, when instead of focusing on the object (stone, breath, etc.), we find

ourselves thinking instead about what we are going to have for lunch, when we become aware that we have strayed from the object, we just stop straying and gently bring our mind back to the object and begin again, start over.

There is no blame, no regret, no admonishing ourselves for straying, no thought at all or energy spent on our lapse. That is just a waste of time. Instead, we just bring the mind back to focusing on the object we have chosen for meditation and begin again.

And this is what they call it “meditation practice,” because we are ‘practicing’ and learning a habit, in this case to keep our mind on what we are doing and not to stray from it. AND.... if we do stray, we spend zero time worrying about our lapse or mistake, and just bring the mind back and start over.

My point then is that this habit of starting over with no remorse or without dwelling on the past that we learn in meditation practice, and not dwelling on what happened, what should have happened, might have happened, on what we are sorry that happened, etc. carries over into life events that happen to us, as well.

It is not that we should feel no remorse or regret when we make a big mistake. Of course we do. Or that the loss of something or someone important to us should not affect us. Of course it does.

The idea here is that we don’t want to add insult to injury. It is unfortunate that something awful has happened in our lives that impacts us. If on top of that we then spend untold hours, days, months, or years of our life regretting it, then we really do continue that loss. We add insult to the injury that we already have sustained.

In meditation practice we learn the habit of just dropping it, much like when my dog picks up some smelly dead thing and I say to him, “Leave it!” We can do the same when these catastrophic or humiliating events happen to us: just leave it. We can let it go and start over without wasting our precious life energy on what we can do nothing about anyway. We don’t need to add insult to injury.

We may not be able to control what happens to us in lives, what life brings, but we can learn to control our attitude, how ‘we’ react to what happens. Learning to just drop our regret, remorse, sorrow, anger, and so on, and get back to living our life is an important lesson we can all stand to learn. And here is how I first learned this:

As a computer programmer, every once in a while I would accidentally delete an entire day’s (or week’s) work at the touch of a button. It is the dreaded “operator error,” for which we can blame no one but ourselves. In the beginning, I would rant and rave, yell and even quit working for a while. I would sulk and curse my fate. However, sooner or later I would just get back to work and start over. I had no choice.

In time I learned to spend not even an instant on regret, but just calmly to begin again. I would immediately start over. Later, when I began to practice meditation, this habit was further reinforced until when something terrible happens, I just “leave it” and continue with the life that I still have.