



A Wider View

Feeling something painful or difficult tends to cause us to focus our attention narrowly, allowing pain or fear to loom large in our minds. If we bring a wider perspective to the experience, we can more effectively open up to the gift buried inside of it.

Take some time to conjure up a difficult experience, bringing it fully to mind, and then consider these questions.

- Is there a specific bodily sensation that is associated with this experience and can you say “yes” just to that sensation? Give yourself a minute to consider that and to see if you can. Don’t rush.
- Have you seen anyone in your family struggle with something like this experience and if so can you bring that memory to mind with the purpose of looking at their experience with compassion? Again, don’t rush. Extract what you can from the question and then move on.
- Is there a specific thought associated with this experience and can you say “yes” just to that thought? Think that thought as a thought and drop any sense of struggle with it. Just notice it.
- If you were to look back on your life from a wiser future would you say there is something in this experience for you to learn from? Pause with this question. Don’t get all mindy. Don’t try to figure it out or second-guess yourself. Just gently look to see from a distant and wiser you, what might be inside this experience that would help you on your path?
- What does this experience and your struggles with it suggest you deeply care about? In your pain you find your values: what does this painful area say about your values and vulnerabilities? What does it suggest about what you want?
- If this experience were in a book you were writing, how might the character experiencing it become wiser or more alive as a result? In other words, if you were on a hero’s journey, and this were a challenge, how could the hero use it to foster vitality and wisdom?



- Are there other memories associated with this experience? Can you say “yes” just to one more? Give yourself a minute to consider that and to see if you can. Don’t rush.
- If you blame someone for this experience, can you think of times that you have done something like what they did? Perhaps in a lesser way? Sometimes we hold others responsible for our difficulties. Sometimes we even do that as a way to avoid seeing how our behavior is similar to theirs.
- If someone else you care about were struggling with an experience like this, how would you feel? What might you suggest that they do? Picture a friend with the same issue and allow yourself to connect with both of these questions. How do you feel about them, knowing they have this issue? What would you say to them about what they might do?
- What would you have to do to let go of in order to let go of a struggle with this experience? You picked something you say “no” to – what would you have to give up in order to let go of an attachment to that “no”? This is a subtle question: don’t rush your answer. Open up all of your channels of sensing and being aware. Try to feel the answer more than overthink it. Is there something there you are holding on to?
- If you could feel this experience without defense, what would you be able to do in your life? Allow yourself to reach out and dream. Imagine you could take the experience along with you for an adventure. If you could, what journey would that be?