

Inner Peace University - Module 3, Lesson 3

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[00:00:00] In our quest for inner peace, or we could just as easily say happiness or joy or fulfillment or relief, nothing's more important than clarity, clarity about the mechanics of where disturbance comes from clarity about something that we call in yoga, karma cause and effect. And part of that clarity. Has to do with language.

We want to use language to describe what's happening within us in very specific ways. So that we're all crystal clear on what we're talking about. So with that in mind, I want to introduce two very important terms for our work in this module. They are pain and suffering. For most people those two words, pain and suffering, [00:01:00] are used somewhat interchangeably.

That there's a lot of pain and suffering, we say, without making any really clear delineation between the difference between the two. In this case, however, we're going to be using them in very different ways. So we want to get really clear when we say pain, we're talking about discomfort, discomfort that is caused by our circumstance.

An example would be I'm walking across my living room and I stubbed my toe into the corner of the coffee table. The pain caused by the circumstance is the throbbing in the toe. Now suffering on the other hand is quite a different animal. Suffering is also discomfort, but it's discomfort not caused by the circumstance, it's caused by our reaction to the circumstance.

We could even say by our dysfunctional reaction to the [00:02:00] circumstance. So using the same example, the suffering, when I stubbed my toe into the corner of the table, isn't the throbbing in the toe. It's the frustration or the irritation or the impatience, or the judgment that come from my reaction to the event. That is to say, Who put this table here, or why wasn't I paying attention or who built a table with such sharp edges, right?

It's that mental and emotional reaction to the event that causes the suffering. And as you've probably already noticed, the suffering is mostly mental and emotional and another key difference between pain and suffering and maybe the most important key difference is that pain is mandatory and suffering is optional. In the moment that the toe is stubbed, the pain is a mandatory component of that [00:03:00] moment, the throbbing in the toe. The suffering on the other hand, because it's self created, because it's created by my reaction to the event, is optional because with a little bit of work, I can reprogram the brain and the nervous system to react in a different way.

Now, one of the other big things about this is that if we were given this pile of say, pain and suffering, in most instances, something like 90% of it is self-created suffering. That is to say optional suffering and only 10, 15% of it is mandatory pain. And that's the, that's the real opportunity here.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could reduce our discomfort, the discomfort of pain and suffering by 80%, it'd be nice to reduce it by 10%. So 80%, absolutely. And this is where this [00:04:00] understanding of pain versus suffering becomes well, so critical. And here's how it works. Imagine yourself standing in Whole Foods.

You just bought your groceries for the week. You're standing in line number two and you're reading the national Enquirer and you're engrossed in a fascinating alien baby article down the aisle behind you, aisle number seven, some woman with a cart full of groceries comes down the aisle fails to make the turn and crashes right into your right hip.

Of course, you're startled. You turn to look at her. She looks at you and without so much as a, Oh, I'm sorry. Or a by your leave, or a, Oh my goodness. She just calmly turns without saying a word and disappears down aisle eight. Of course in that moment, you're incensed. I can't believe it. She didn't say anything.

And you turn to the person that's standing next to you in line and say, did you see that woman? Did you see [00:05:00] what she just did? She just ran into me with a cart. Didn't say, I'm sorry. didn't say, Oh my gosh. And just. Calmly turned to out and like, she ran into nothing at all. What am I chopped liver? And then you get up to the counter and the checker says, did you find everything you were looking for?

You say, Oh, I certainly did. And I found something that I wasn't looking for, namely, this crazy woman who ran into me in the cart and didn't even say, I'm sorry, you should really tell a manager because she's going to hurt somebody. Okay. Then you get out into your car, you pick up your cell phone, you call your friend Suzy, Hey Suzy, you're not gonna believe what happened to me in Whole Foods.

I was just standing there in line reading The National Enquirer this woman crashed into me with her cart. I'm not sure if she dislodged anything, but I might have to go to the chiropractor, but she didn't even say I'm sorry, you should really stay out of Whole Foods until they get that sorted. Then you get to work and you go to every cubicle and you talk to every single person there.

And you tell them all about the crazy person at Whole Foods. And then walk in the door at home, your husband, or your wife or your kids say, how was your day? And you say, well, let me tell you about the woman at Whole Foods. To be clear in that story, in [00:06:00] that circumstance, the pain was this, the tap on the hip as a result of the cart, everything else: suffering. Mandatory tap.

All the stress, all the anxiety, all the frustration: optional suffering created by the minds, habituated reaction, something that we call psychological resistance. To the event. Now, the interesting thing here is that if you were to ask that person how their day was, they would say, Oh, it was terrible because of her.

Not understanding that all that she did was tap and the rest of it was manufactured by the brain and the nervous system [00:07:00] by psychological resistance. So understanding the difference between pain and suffering really critical as we begin our brain training for

psychological resistance, because the penalty for indulging and psychological resistance is huge.

It's the creator of the 80 to 90% of the optional discomfort that we experience in our lives.