

Inner Peace University - Module 3, Lesson 4

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[00:00:00] So now let's dive a little bit deeper into psychological resistance, specifically looking at what it is and how it acts to create this suffering, this optional misery, discomfort and irritation in our lives. We'll start with the definition. Psychological resistance is mental, emotional, or attitudinal struggle against what is in any given moment. And to be clear when we say, what is we're talking about now. So it's our struggle against now, or as we've already learned, it's our struggle against the one thing on the planet that can't be any different from how it is at least for now. And psychological resistance typically takes the form of a single repetitive phrase. [00:01:00] This should not be like this. Now to be clear, it doesn't always come in those exact words. When you're sitting in traffic, this should not be like this might be, I can't believe the traffic at this hour, or it might complain why do I always end up in the slow lane?

Or it could say, I knew I should have taken Seventh Street. But if we look at these, we can see at the foundation of every one of these phrases is this idea that this moment should be different from how it is, that this should not be like this. And if you look in your life, you'll see that this kind of psychological resistance is happening all the time with all kinds of things.

And this of course is a problem because psychological resistance is a top, if not the top source of suffering. Let's take a look at another [00:02:00] example of how it all works. Think about traffic because traffic is frustrating and it's universally irritating and traffic is maddening, or is it? When we look at traffic, I mean, really look at it with fresh eyes and look at just what's really going on, we'll see that traffic is you sitting in a comfortable seat. Traffic is you listening to your favorite radio station, and traffic is you watching the view go by. And that's traffic. Comfortable seat, music, and view. So where's the problem really? Is it in the circumstance, or is it perhaps somewhere else? And of course, as we've already seen, it is somewhere else specifically it's in the brain's [00:03:00] reaction to the circumstance, not the circumstance itself. When the brain chimes in with a psychological resistance, it activates the endocrine system.

Remember, the endocrine system is that little pharmaceutical factory that lives within us that's responsible for injecting hormones and other biochemicals into the bloodstream, which creates these uncomfortable and unhelpful emotions. So when the brain chimes in with when are they going to widen this freeway, it activates the endocrine system, which shoots hormones into the bloodstream and we get a minor emotional discomfort. And then when it chimes in, why is the other lane always moving faster? Again, it activates the endocrine system. We get some more hormones and we feel a little bit more irritated. Or then it says, why didn't they build more lanes to begin with brain communicates to the endocrine system and [00:04:00] now we have full blown irritation. If you look at this closely, you'll see that this is the cycle of becoming at work.

Now the thing we need to be clear on is that the irritation or the impatience or the frustration can't be coming from the traffic, because if it was, if it was inherent in the traffic, it would happen every time and in an equal amount, but it doesn't.

Sometimes the traffic doesn't bother us at all. I mean, imagine you're driving on your way home. You're not late. You have plenty of extra time. And your favorite song comes on the radio. In that moment, traffic is just traffic. You're relaxed. You're enjoying the experience. That is until the brain comes in with its psychological resistance.

This should not be like that. And at which point the traffic seems to [00:05:00] be frustrating, but as we know now, it's really the brain's reaction that's responsible for it. And so it goes with that annoying coworker or the dirty dishes left in the sink, or the kid's not doing what they ought to be doing.

This brings us to the equation of suffering, a way to really understand how the various different pieces of psychological resistance come together and how we can defeat it.

Just so it's fresh in our minds let's take just a moment to review pain versus suffering once again. So as we talked about previously pain is discomfort. It's caused by circumstance and it's mandatory. That is to say that in the moment that pain is happening, pain is happening. When I stubbed my toe, the throb is mandatory. On the [00:06:00] other hand, suffering is also discomfort, but it's not caused by circumstance is caused by our reaction to circumstance, or maybe said more precisely it's caused by the brain's reaction to circumstance. And most importantly, suffering is optional.

Now the equation of suffering is just a way to understand how all of these pieces come together and the fact of the matter is, is that when it comes to our behaviors and our feelings, it's a lot more like mathematics than most people actually believe. So we'll start with a basic equation, like one plus two equals three, and then we'll look at the equation of suffering, which is experience plus resistance equals suffering.

Now, in our example, it was traffic. It's the experience. [00:07:00] Our impatience is resistance and frustration was the suffering. Now anybody who can remember back to your first or second grade math class can tell you if we change one aspect of the equation, it changes the sum. So in this case, if we change the two to a zero, we have one plus zero equals one.

And in the same way, if we change the equation of suffering and we changed the impatience to a zero, we have traffic plus zero equals traffic and the frustration evaporates. This is the power of understanding the mechanics of psychological resistance. Traffic plus zero equals traffic. Which is a comfortable seat, music, and a view.

[00:08:00] The key takeaways in this module are first, now is as now is. That is to say that this moment can not be in any way different from how it is at least for now. Second, resistance can have no effect on now. No matter how much the mind protests against what's happening. Resistance causes suffering. That is, it increases the intensity of the uncomfortable emotion and it actually reduces our capacity to weather it as well. Resistance

is caused by the brain's reaction to now. And the antidote for resistance is something we call peaceful coexistence. I'll explain how that works in the next lesson.