

Understanding Experience

A practical guide to awareness, acceptance, and intentional living

You don't have to control everything that happens to you to become more intentional about what you do next.

1. Life is the sum of its parts

$$2 + 2 + 2 = 6 \quad 2 + 2 + 4 = 8$$

Neither answer is good or bad. Each is the complete result of the numbers that went into the equation.

Life works similarly. This moment is the culmination of what has happened before it. Some events resulted from our decisions. Others occurred outside our control.

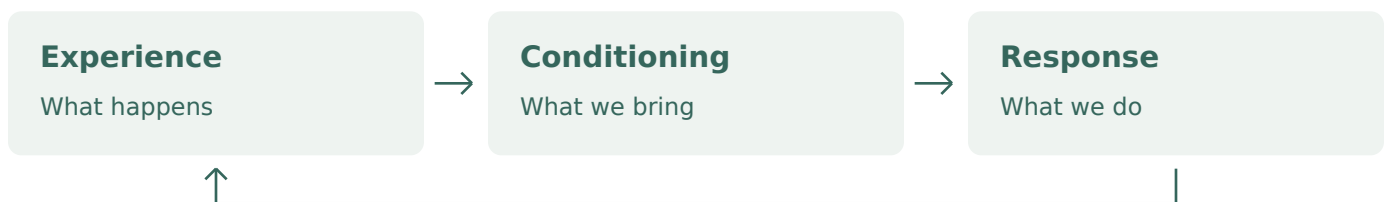
Here, perfect means complete or whole: the sum of the parts. It does not mean everything that happened was good, fair, or desirable.

We cannot change what has already happened. We can decide what to contribute to what happens next.

2. Experience shapes our expectations

Experiences contribute to our preferences, beliefs, expectations, and habits. Together, these form part of our conditioning.

We learn what we enjoy, what feels threatening, and how we believe people should behave. When events differ from our expectations, our bodies and minds may react automatically.



Each response becomes part of a new experience. Awareness creates opportunities to change the pattern.

Feelings, stories, and choices

3. Emotion is an experience, not an instruction

Your nervous system may react before you consciously understand why. You might notice tension, heat, a racing heart, or an urge to defend yourself or escape.

You don't necessarily choose these initial reactions. With practice, you can notice them and influence how you respond.

You can feel anger without acting aggressively. You can experience a craving without automatically following it.

4. Resistance is a teacher

Run your hand across a piece of wood. The friction reveals rough areas that may need attention. The roughness is information, not a failure of the wood.

Here, resistance means fighting the reality of what has happened or insisting that an experience must be different before we can work with it. It can reveal expectations, fears, beliefs, and familiar reactions.

Fear, pain, and protective action are not automatically resistance. You can acknowledge danger and act to protect yourself.

Resistance is not your enemy. It is your teacher.

One event, two responses

Tom is angry and yells at Mark. Mark feels anger rising.

Automatic reaction

"He is disrespecting me!"
Mark yells back.
Tom reacts to Mark's yelling.
Each reaction creates another event.

Intentional response

"Tom is yelling. I feel angry."
"I can talk when we are calmer."
Mark sets a boundary or leaves.
Tom's next response is up to Tom.

Leaving can happen from acceptance or resistance. The action alone does not reveal the inner experience. You may still feel anger while responding intentionally.

Awareness opens a door

5. Awareness comes before acceptance

Perhaps you replay an argument for two days before noticing what you are doing. That recognition is awareness.

Awareness of resistance is the beginning of acceptance. You can acknowledge, “This is what I am experiencing right now,” including any resistance that remains.

You do not have to understand, approve of, or agree with what happened in order to accept that it happened.

Every moment of recognition counts

Days later

Hours later

Minutes later

In the moment

With practice, recognition may come sooner. This is an illustration, not a schedule. Progress can vary with stress, circumstances, and the pattern involved.

6. Acceptance supports intentional action

Acceptance does not mean doing nothing. You may respond calmly, set a firm boundary, walk away, seek help, or address an issue later.

You do not have to control what happens next in order to choose what you do next.

7. Practice changes patterns

Familiar responses can become automatic. Each time you notice a pattern and practice another response, you create an opportunity for new learning.

Recognizing a pattern afterward is still useful. Reflect, repair what you can, and use what you learned next time.

Refinement has no deadline

80

120

180

300

600

3000

Sandpaper grit: each stage has value. Finer sandpaper does not invalidate the earlier work. The analogy describes refinement, not levels of human worth.

There is no deadline for growth. Work at a pace you can sustain.

Begin with what is here

A simple daily practice

1. What happened?

Describe the event without adding assumptions.

2. What am I experiencing?

Notice emotions, physical sensations, thoughts, and urges.

3. What am I resisting?

Explore the preferences, expectations, or beliefs involved.

4. Can I allow this experience to be what it is?

Include any resistance you still feel. Acceptance need not change the feeling immediately.

5. What can I do now?

Choose an action that fits reality and your values. Learn from what follows.

Pain and suffering

Pain, grief, fear, and loss are part of human experience. In this framework, suffering means the additional struggle that can arise when we resist an experience. In everyday language, the word also describes distress without resistance.

"This hurts" acknowledges pain. "This should not be happening" may add a struggle with reality. Acceptance may ease that struggle without removing the pain. Pain still deserves care and support.

A final reminder: don't resist your resistance

Acceptance is not another expectation to satisfy. You may notice resistance from yesterday or years ago. You may feel frustrated with yourself for resisting. Now you are aware of something else.

Resistance is not evidence that the practice has failed. Resistance is an opportunity to practice.

Notice what is happening. Allow yourself to experience it. Learn what you can. Then return to living your life.

Continue the conversation

If you would like to discuss these topics further, schedule a coaching session with Paul Brodie or visit ImagineMovingOn.com.

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