

The Power of Yes (Adapted from Tara Brach)

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full breaths. Bring to mind a current situation that elicits a reaction of anger, fear, or grief or a specific example of one of the resistances that you just named... the things that seem to lure us away from our fully awake, alive selves. The more fully you get in touch with the charged essence of the story, the more readily you can access the feelings in your heart and throughout your body. What is it about this situation that provokes the strongest feelings? You might see a particular scene in your mind, hear words that were spoken, recognize a belief you hold about how this situation reflects in you or what it means for your future. Be especially aware of the feelings in your stomach, chest and throat.

In order to see firsthand what happens when you resist experience, begin by experimenting with saying no. As you connect with the pain you feel in the situation you have chosen, mentally direct a stream of no at the feelings. No to the unpleasantness of fear, anger, compulsive behavior, shame or grief. Let the word carry the energy of no- rejecting, pushing away what you are experiencing. As you say no, notice what this resistance feels like in your body. Do you feel tightness, pressure? What happens to the painful feelings as you say no? Imagine what your life would be like if, for the next hours, weeks and months, you continued to move through the world with the thoughts and feelings of no.

Take a few deep breaths and let go by relaxing through the body, opening up your eyes or shifting posture a bit. Now take a few moments to call to mind again the painful situation or resistance you'd previously chosen, remembering the images, words, beliefs and feelings connected with it. Now direct a stream of the word yes at your experience.

Agree to the experience with yes. Let the feelings float, held in the environment of yes. Even if there are waves of no- fear or anger that arise with the painful situation or even from doing this exercise- that's okay. Let these natural reactions be received into the larger field of yes. Yes to the pain. Yes to the parts of us that want to pain to go away. Yes to whatever thoughts or feelings arise. Notice your experience as you say yes. Is there softening, opening or movement in your body? Is there more space or oneness in your mind? What happens to the unpleasantness as you say yes? Does it get more intense? Does it get more diffuse? What happens to your heart when you say yes? What would your experience be in the hours, weeks, months to come if could bring the spirit of yes to the inevitable challenges and sorrows of life?

Continue to sit now, releasing thoughts and resting in an alert, relaxed awareness. Let your tension be to say a gentle YES to whatever sensations, emotions, sounds or images may arise in your awareness.