

“Yes, And...”



There's a concept in improvisation that's called "Yes, And..." that I have been thinking about recently. The idea is that whatever the person you are interacting with tosses, you accept and move with, and rather than block the energy you find a way to say yes. What I have noticed is that I can use this principle in my everyday life even when the "tosses" don't feel friendly. I see it as responding rather than reacting, meeting what is happening rather than resisting, and I find it is key to experiencing aliveness.

Having faced the 'toss' from the Universe in the form of COVID-19, and then facing the horror of the murders of George Floyd and other Black men and women, I am getting lots of practice noticing and feeling my resistance and choosing to turn towards what is. I'm accepting that it's time for me to face the unknown about COVID-19, and my own racism and lack of knowledge about privilege.

The first action steps I am choosing are to educate myself, listen and learn. We are in complex times because the flaws in the foundation of our country when it comes to social justice are glaringly obvious. The injustice on our planet has caused an ache in my heart for so many years and I am heartened that this system of oppression and harm is coming to light. I expect that the dismantling will be messy, uncomfortable and scary and I am willing to face what comes and make changes in my own life.

I have daily practices, such as belly breathing and Fear Melters® that support me in my readiness to face the unexpected with grace. I think of these tools as filling my "piggy-bank" for when I need them. I am training my body to respond, rather than react, to the unexpected. And with all that is happening in our world today, I notice that my reserves are being drawn upon daily.

When we got thrown the big ole' toss from the Universe in the form of COVID-19 I've noticed how varied my responses have been. In the first couple of weeks, I felt my ability to meet the crisis with creativity and action, and I rode that wave all the way through. In the next phase, I felt a curtain come down, and my energy began to drain, and I required more rest and self-care than usual, and what I see now, is that I am not the same person today as I was pre-COVID-19. Now that we are shaking loose the hidden yet obvious racism in our country, I am glad that this new version of me is here to face this important time on our planet. She's gotten far better at the unknown than her predecessor.

I know that I have much to learn. This is both exhilarating and unsettling. I am curious about how my clients, my community, and my world are moving through this time. I feel scared at the thought of facing this crisis without the tools and the practices that I have committed to in my life. I notice that some people are taking these times with grace and some have put their fighting gloves on. What I notice is that there are many who are clinging to what is familiar and don't want to see that life is new, and that change is necessary and can bring great opportunities for transformation.

We have collectively stepped into the unknown in a big way and though I am deeply saddened by the devastating losses to the Black Community, and from COVID-19, I feel a spark of possibility that our planet has a chance to wake up. I know that without the consciousness tools I've learned and actively practiced, I'd probably be frozen in fear. Carl Jung taught the concept that what we resist persists, and I have found this to be accurate. Are you finding yourself fighting against wearing a mask? Are you a white person saying "I'm colorblind"? What I notice about myself is if I am pushing against something, I'm usually scared.

Attempting to control our circumstances when we feel scared is a survival instinct. This is helpful when we are up against something like being trapped in a dangerous place and need to get out, but it's not so helpful when we distract ourselves from what is really happening by projecting our fear onto someone or something else. If you find yourself feeling fight-y, and want to tune in with what is really happening for you, you might try the following that I learned from my work with the Restoring Resourcefulness Program:

PRESENCING:

1st step: Turn fully towards what you are feeling inside right now.

2nd step: Open up your posture. Relax your jaw, uncross arms/legs.

3rd step: Breathe easily. Put your hand on your belly and release your breath while slightly contracting your belly, then blow your belly up like a balloon while you take a nice deep breath in. Practice this for a a minute or two.

F.A.C.T:

Now you can use a part of the F.A.C.T. process:

Open to curiosity by creating a pleasant HmMMM sound. (This is calming to our system.) and ask yourself what it is that you aren't facing fully about all of this. Keep breathing while you HmMMM and ask yourself: "What am I not fully facing about all of this?"

If you are interested in continuing your exploration of this, you can go [here](#): for the rest of the process of F.A.C.T.

Whatever you discovered, my guess is that you will create more flow and ease in yourself if you look at what is underneath your resistance to what is happening in our world right now. What I want most for myself and for our world, is for us to take this toss from the Universe and create from it. My mentor Katie Hendricks asks the question: *How can you turn this into creative expression?* and I love this challenge.

COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter are here and our world is new. Necessary changes are happening and I am choosing to embrace them rather than cling to the old version of life. I have faced that it is time for me to educate myself about systemic racism, and then make changes and speak up. I have faced that my life doesn't look the same way that it did before our global pandemic began and I'm OK with that. I'm learning how to be with what is. And this feels like freedom to me.

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If you are having thoughts like "all lives matter," please educate yourself. This is a time for looking beyond yourself. I am embarrassed to say that I said this to one of my adult children a few years ago and in one sharp sentence I was awake and grateful I raised young adults who speak up for justice. A resource about racism that I am choosing to begin my learning with is "My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies" and I also learned about racism from Ian Haney Lopez's work.

And please wear a mask when you are in public. I get that you might believe it is the wrong way to handle the pandemic, but this is a time for us to think beyond our own belief systems and wake to the possibility that there is another viewpoint far more important. To be rooted in a belief system without openness to learning is dangerous and has had devastating effects on our world.

I am choosing to turn towards the ways that I can take responsibility and support a global movement towards creating a world that works for everyone. Will you join me?

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