

## Living with Grace

When I think about living in a state of grace, the images that come to mind are – a sense of peace and joyfulness; centeredness, grounded self confidence; handling obstacles with ease in an open and honest way that is beneficial to all concerned. I also “see” solutions to life’s obstacles coming forward in creative, unexpected, fun ways. When I am in a state of grace I am centered, neutral, non-judgmental, accepting, joyful and loving.

I have moments of this “State of Grace” in my life, and when I have them I know this is how I want to live all the time. Being human, this is a work in progress. Maintaining this state for any length of time is not only challenging, but requires a deep commitment to do the work that comes with it.

One thing is clear - living with grace is so much easier when all is going my way, when I’m not in the gap. When I am out of grace, experiencing stress, anger, frustration, depression, etc, I notice how easily my old ineffectual reactions rear their head. Some of my reactive patterns are jumping to conclusions about what the other is saying and interrupting with “yes but” response; feeling it’s me against the rest of the world; feeling easily rattled; shutting others out; deciding I have to solve things on my own as no one else can be relied on; negating any good I may have contributed and focusing only on what I judge I have done wrong. So much for grace!

Creating grace requires courage and the willingness to observe ourselves and to reflect on what we see. Having taken a hard honest look at ourselves it then requires that we make the choice to do something about our less effective behavior. I have noticed that changing well ingrained behavior is usually a process that goes something like this. The first step is to become aware of the ineffective behavior. This happens if we are willing to reflect on what we did. We can then decide to choose a different response in the future and identify what that choice might be. Now, the next few times we are in a similar situation we may automatically react; and only after the incident do we realize what we did. If we are willing to continue to reflect and self evaluate we ultimately progress to noticing the old pattern of behavior as we are doing it, not after. From there we may notice our initial response as we are doing it, curbing it and making a better choice in the moment. To truly change our patterns of behavior we need to consciously choose new more appropriate behavior each time we are faced with a challenging situation until eventually we reach a state where a new choice is assimilated as an automatic response. Changing well ingrained patterns takes commitment but the rewards are great. The more graceful behaviors I choose the more grace filled moments I create.

After years of working on creating more grace in my life I have discovered a few keys which you might find helpful if you too are looking to create more grace in your life.

- **Meditation:**  
Since 1990 I have practiced daily meditation with greater and lesser degrees of devotion. My experience has been that when I diligently meditate on a daily basis my life is more grace filled and I am able to maintain this sense of grace more easily when in the GAP. When I get out of the daily practice somehow I do not experience the sense of grace as much and my responses in the GAP are not as graceful as I would like. My experience is

that meditation helps to relieve stress, creates a more peaceful state of mind and increases self trust.

- Diligently manage my thinking and where I put my focus:  
When my focus is on the full bright picture I have created of what I want and my thinking is around how I can create this picture I am more joyful, enthusiastic and centered.
- Clearly express the values that give me grace:  
Show respect, acceptance, honesty and kindness to those I come in contact with throughout my day.
- Last but not least - service:  
The more in service I can be to others no matter how small or big, the more joy, peace and loving that comes back my way.

May your life be filled with one grace filled moment after another.