

A Simple 4-Step Guide to Finding Peace

What do we really want from life? If we are honest, what we ultimately all want is to be happy, peaceful, free of suffering. We can search for this satisfaction out in the world – in our job, our relationships, our possessions, our achievements, our health – and we may be temporarily successful. However, in this unpredictable and ever-changing experience of life we will eventually discover that the world, other people and even our bodies don't always cooperate with our plans. To find a more stable and lasting peace that doesn't rely on outer circumstances, we need to look deeper.

These four steps to doing just that are simple in theory, but not necessarily in practice. Simple because all we need to do them is ourselves – no app, no music, no particular environment or company – just a willingness to look beyond what we have been taught to be true about who we are.

Not so simple because we have been so conditioned to focus completely on our thoughts and emotions – and the stories we tell ourselves about them – that we believe they are the totality of our identity. This is what we have been taught from the time we were born and what is constantly being reinforced by our family and society.

Believing that we are limited to a human form may not be particularly painful when life is going well, but when it's not, we can be completely sucked into the realms of Hell. And for some of us, even an outwardly pleasant life can be accompanied by extreme internal negativity, so that Hell becomes our daily experience and we have no idea how to escape.

To implement this practice, then, can take a real willingness to sincerely say, "I've suffered enough" and to turn loose of our identification with our painful thoughts and emotions, giving our trust and allegiance, instead, to What We Truly Are beyond human form. It's a radical shift in our way of relating to our sense of self, to who we *think* and *feel* we are – to be a human being and yet to also be free of being human.

So, right now, no matter what you are thinking or feeling, no matter what is going on in your life, see if you can open to a different possibility.

1. **PAUSE AND BREATHE.** Pause whatever you are doing and take a few deep, conscious breaths. You can have your eyes open or shut, whatever seems right in the moment. Bring your attention into your body in whatever way works for you. You could rub your hands together, clasp your fingers and bring your hands to your heart, stretch or gently move in some other way.

2. **ALLOW YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.** If you are feeling stressed, notice what stories you are telling yourself and how you feel in your body. Do not fight against these thoughts, emotions and even physical energies; instead, simply allow them to be present just as they are without getting mentally entangled with why they are here. Don't rush this. Play with it a bit, getting the feel for what it is like to not resist your inner experience. If you are feeling relatively peaceful right now, you can notice what this feels like and what thoughts are appearing to support this. See how it is to not cling to these thoughts and experiences, being willing for them to stay or to go.
3. **NOTICE WHAT IS AWARE.** As you allow your thoughts and feelings to simply be, there is the opportunity to step back from them a bit and maybe discover some space around them. When you find this space, see if you can turn your attention to it even more and notice the Spacious Presence that is aware of experience. It is the unchanging container within which all thoughts and feelings come and go and is untouched by whatever is appearing. This Conscious Presence is ALWAYS here and ALWAYS accessible with this shift in where you put your focus because it is What You Truly Are.
4. **APPRECIATE WHAT YOU ARE.** Once you consciously connect with this Awareness, your True Self, rest here for a bit. Take some time to really appreciate it, and the potential implications, before rushing back to your activities.

You can take such a pause several times a day, even if just for a few minutes, especially when you are feeling stressed. In fact, the more often you can do this, the better, because even if we have a regular daily meditation practice, we can get caught up in stress and worry throughout the day and forget the peace that can be accessed right now. And it can be beneficial to connect to What We Truly Are even when life is going well, as it begins to create a supportive and nourishing reservoir to draw upon when we really need it.

To do this is not to deny what is happening to us on a human level. Instead, it can provide a sense of peace and stability, something we can count on when the going gets rough. Our True Self can also be a powerful resource that gives our human self access to a higher intelligence and creativity that allows us to more effectively respond to what is arising.

I hope this is helpful! Blessings and love to you on your human journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.