

## **ACCEPTANCE**

**by Serge Kahili King**

The following question was sent to me by a student: “I listen to teachings that tell me to accept whatever happens and just get on with my life, but I don't understand. How can I accept something that causes me emotional or physical pain?”

The problem with “accepting” something is due to the many meanings given to this word in English. Most problematic is the meaning of “to tolerate or submit to something unpleasant or undesired.” Adding to the problem is the meaning of “to receive something as adequate, valid, or suitable.” And an unspoken, but extremely common meaning given to this word is “to let something you don't like hang around forever.”

Naturally, these meanings make the idea of acceptance sound like stupidity. Who in their right mind would want to do that, unless you “accept” a philosophy of predestination or unchangeable fate.

So, why would a teacher (me, for instance) recommend that you accept whatever happens and move on? This is based on another meaning of the word: “to take upon oneself a responsibility or liability.” This does not mean to take responsibility for it happening, it means taking responsibility for doing something about it.

Some people prefer to use the word “acknowledge” instead of “accept,” but the implication is different. You can acknowledge something without doing anything about it, but if you accept it in the meaning just given, doing something about it is the next related step.

There are two things you can do about something, once you have accepted its existence:

1. Consciously change the situation, if you can. You cannot control any situation, but you can always change something about the situation. You may not be able to change the whole thing, but the more knowledge, skill, energy and persistence you can bring to bear on it, the more effective your efforts will be. Of course, this requires a certain degree of self confidence to even begin making a change in the situation, but even the smallest change is worthwhile, either in the source of the situation, the nature of the situation, or the way you deal with it.

2. Consciously change yourself. This means to stop resisting the situation (ongoing emotional or physical resistance makes anything harder to change), get centered in the present moment, and keep a focus on what you want, instead of on what you don't want. To the degree you can do this, magic happens. In other words, situations have a very strong tendency to change themselves when you stop resisting them and hold a positive focus of intent or desire. The most important and useful way to change yourself in such a situation is to find a way, with help if possible or necessary, to remove all fear and doubt about the situation. It may not be easy, but it's very much worth the try.