

Why Do We Struggle With Change?

We think we need to improve ourselves and our current situation, because we're dissatisfied (at least a little bit) with how things are. We have a drive to improve, improve.

So we strive for change — exercise more, eat better, read more, be more mindful, do more meaningful work, be more disciplined.

And yet, we struggle with change. Why is that? What's going on?

The problem is that we are clinging to the illusion of solidity.

Allow me to explain. It turns out that we all want things to be solid in our lives: we want a solid income, work routine, daily routine. We want a solid version of ourselves, that's not so blown about by the winds of whim.

We want everyone else around us to be solid, dependable, stable, the way we want them to be. We want our relationships to be solid, trustworthy. We want our health to be solid, not subject to injury and depression and illness. We want everyone else to be solid and not die or get sick. Of course, our rational minds know this always possible, but still, this is what we want. Solidity.

Unfortunately, we are grasping for something solid ... in a river. There is no solidity, just fluidity.

Think about yourself for a second: can you stick to a perfect routine, never changing, for an entire year? No, probably not — most of us can't do it for a day. Why is that? Why can't we just make a plan and stick to it? It's because our minds are not machines that follow a fixed program, but instead are complex, constantly changing, constantly reacting to new things, constantly making new connections, fluid, dynamic, everchanging. We can't shape ourselves into a solid shape of our choosing any more than we can grab a handful of water and make it into a solid shape.

Well, what if we freeze the water to make it solid, you might ask? Let's think about your thoughts: take a single thought, the next one you have, and freeze it. Make it stay in your mind, unchanging, without going anywhere, without jumping to another thought. Can't do it, can you? I sure can't. We don't control our thoughts. We can't make them stay still. We can't force them into a pattern we want to follow. It's fluid. It's like trying to control the wind.

We are fluid, like water. Nonsolid, like wind.

And yet we want ourselves to be solid. We grasp for this solidity, despite our fluidity. We struggle with our improvements, because even if we perfectly plan our solid progress, we will never follow this perfectly solid plan. We drip through the form we created for ourselves, find the cracks and leak out of it.

Everything else around us is also nonsolid. Every other person is just as fluid as we are. We want everything and everyone to be solid, but they aren't.

So we struggle with this, because nothing is the way we want it to be. Nothing is stable, nothing follows our ideals, no one is the way we hope they will be. We get frustrated, anxious, worried, angry, sad, fearful.

Letting Go of Solidity, Embracing Fluidity

So what's the solution? How can we ever improve ourselves? How can we let go of frustrations and fears in this fluid world?

Start by embracing the fluidity. Look at your thoughts, your fears, your pain, and really investigate them. See their nature. Understand that even if the difficulty you're facing right now feels solid, it's actually vapor, and will dissipate in moments.

None of the problems around us are that big of a deal, when we realize they're just passing mist.

In this way, we can just sit in the mist, and smile. Cherish this mistful moment.

When we plan to do a habit every day, and we fail ... notice that we failed because of our fluidity. Examine the fluidity of yourself. Be curious about it. Lay back into the gentle fluid waters of yourself, and relax. It's OK, this warm water that is you, just as you are.

The fluidity of ourselves is only "bad" if we want solidity.

Whenever you're struggling, notice how you are grasping for solidity. Notice how the thing you're hoping will be solid is in fact vapor. Investigate it, with friendliness and curiosity.

And then smile, relax, and enjoy the mist.

By LEO BABAUTA