

The Power of Pause

Recently someone asked me to name one of the most valuable tools I offer my clients. I took a breath and waited for an answer. In that moment, without thinking, I became the answer: I replied "I teach the power of the pause".

People choose coaching to help them address a myriad of personal and professional issues, such as overwhelm, stress, challenging relationships, lack of focus, procrastination, and overall life balance. Together we often discover that underlying these presenting issues is a deep desire for authenticity: "I just want to be myself." And ... "If I were myself, I would feel free, purposeful, and happy."

Coaching can then become a wonderful kind of excavation. Using a process called DreamShifting, we dig down through layers of unconscious beliefs, habits, and patterned thoughts, to bedrock – one's authentic self. Along the way we explore how negative reactions may be eroding relationship with self and others. There are exquisite moments when the client shifts perception and clearly sees the truth of who they are. A key to this shift is pausing. If we don't pause, we can easily fall back into unconsciousness. When we do pause, we open into a space of possibility and create the opportunity to choose something new.

In our busy lives how do we cultivate the ability to pause? Through practice. Here is a simple meditation exercise I've learned that I share with my clients:

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Begin to focus on your breathing. Notice, without judgment, the length of your inhalation and the length of your exhalation. Sense the breath coming in through your nose and mouth, and imagine it filling every cell in your body with new life and new possibility. Sense the breath moving out and taking with it everything that is past and no longer needed. Now, pay special attention to the end of each exhalation. Notice the moment when the breath pauses, just before the next inhalation occurs. Feel into that gap. Let the breath dissolve into space. Can you allow yourself to surrender into the unknowable – the ocean of possibility?

Next time you're in a stressful moment, and feel compelled to react in a familiar and habitual way, bring your awareness to the pause at the end of your exhalation. Ask yourself, "What might happen if I let go of everything I know into this space? Now what do I choose?"

~Linda Landon, ACC (March 2007)