

January 17 Radical Acceptance

*“God is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4. 5b-7

I find it a challenge to “not be anxious about anything.” The list of things to be anxious about is endless. From threats of war, climate change, gun violence and the fall elections to things closer to home, which can include financial, health or relationship stresses, we have a lot to be anxious about. A Buddhist concept, called radical acceptance, may be helpful during these times of anxiety. Radical acceptance is about accepting life on life’s terms and not resisting what you cannot change.

Of course, accepting reality is difficult when life is painful. No one wants to experience pain, disappointment, sadness, or loss. But those experiences are a part of life. When you attempt to avoid or resist those emotions, you add suffering to your pain. You may create more anxiety by building the emotion bigger with your thoughts or create more misery by attempting to avoid the painful emotions.

By practicing radical acceptance, you can lessen some of the suffering. One can accomplish this through meditation and prayer. The prayer written by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and used by many in the AA community is a great one for practicing radical acceptance. “God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Now don’t misunderstand me, it’s still important to work for change on those things we can change. There are some things in the world that are unacceptable!

You might also try this alternate version: God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know it’s me. That’s radical acceptance. May you experience the peace of God this week.

*Paula*