



And...detach

Being completely attached to your external life leaves you in a precarious place, while total detachment denies human desire. Dana Mrkich suggests striking a balance for inner peace.

For years, self-help books told us that 'happiness comes from within', yet now the focus seems to be on creating as much success and abundance as possible in our outer lives. So which is it? Does happiness come from finding inner peace or will a new car and a soul mate put a permanent smile on our faces? I believe the answer lies somewhere in between, in a healthy place called non-attachment.

Some people have found their inner peace by meditating in a space of detachment. This way of being goes along the lines of, 'I don't need a fancy home or loads of money to be happy. I can feel rich on the inside, even if I live in a cave with no possessions'. That's all well and good, but how many of us can escape to a cave – or want to? This mentality also insinuates there is something wrong with having desires connected to the material world, or that genuine spirituality and physical comforts can't co-exist.

Others have found their happiness by immersing themselves in the material, becoming overly attached to the external. How they feel on the inside is completely influenced and determined by what is happening on the outside. They get their sense of safety, security and status from their job, relationship, house or car.

The problem with this is that we cannot control the external. We have all seen what happens to a person – or have even experienced it ourselves – when their entire sense of self revolved around a partner or work, and suddenly the partner leaves or the

person is retrenched from their job. Having built their world on a foundation over which they had no control, this person's world collapses.

Over-attachment to the external is like handing someone else the reins to your emotional and physical wellbeing. When we are overly attached to the external, we place ourselves in the precarious position of needing a situation to work out the way we want it to, or needing a person to act a certain way, in order for us to be happy. We are all getting a lesson in this right now with the volatile state of the economy. If we let our moods swing up and down according to the movement of the stock market or interest rates, we are going to feel quite a bit of motion sickness!

Centre Yourself

We are more likely to find true fulfillment in the centre, finding our way there by *becoming* centred. When we are in our centre, we don't need to have something in order to feel happy or at peace. This doesn't mean we become apathetic about life or fall into a passive way of being. Quite conversely, in this space, we feel more fully alive than ever before. We do all we can to make our dreams come true, while having an open mind and heart around the process and potential outcomes. We let go of our need to have things unfold a certain way, trusting that while we may not get everything we want when we want it, we will always receive everything we need, when we need it. We take back the reins of our physical and

emotional wellbeing, while surrendering to the higher aspect of ourself that always guides us in the best possible direction. Of course, we still have emotional responses to life's experiences, but we no longer let those experiences determine how we feel about ourselves.

We know that our true foundation, the one that will always be there for us, comes from our connection to our authentic self. We identify ourselves by who we are inside ('I am strong, kind, generous, adventurous and capable'), rather than placing our sense of identity on external factors ('I am married, I work as an accountant, I live in Melbourne').

How do you describe yourself? What makes you who you are? As an exercise, write down all the ways in which you identify yourself, in the order of importance. The first third of your list is your foundation, so reading back through it, ask yourself, what is holding up your life – inner qualities that you can turn to during challenging times or external factors that can change at any moment? In what way would you need to rewrite your list to have as strong a foundation as possible? **em**

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