

How Can I Surrender?

Because of how central the experience of surrender is to the spiritual path, a frequent question I get is: How can I surrender? The problem is, surrender either happens or it doesn't. It can't be taught. We can become aware of various issues that keep us from surrendering, and dealing with those issues can help, but this will not in itself generate surrender. For instance, if one doesn't trust the Divine, how is one going to surrender to it? You can only surrender to what you trust. If you were abused as a child and this impacted your ability to trust the Divine or to trust Life, you can work on the abuse trauma, but that in itself won't re-establish trust, although it can help. Trust is the key to surrender. But you can't force trust. You can't make trust happen. Either you trust or you don't. But you can invite the possibility of trust by meditating on it, feeling into where the distrust arises from within your being. Deep in your heart you want to trust. Once upon a time you did. You can invite trust by remembering how it was when trust was natural for you. This may, over time, lead to surrender.

And there are other ways to invite surrender. It turns out that we can't really experience beauty without some kind of movement of surrender in the heart. Note that recognizing beauty, which is appreciating beauty conceptually, is not the same as really experiencing it. When you really experience it, something gives way in the heart. So if you are able to really experience beauty, make a practice of it. Experience beauty frequently and deeply, and practice seeing beauty in everything. Since the experience of beauty requires some measure of surrender, expanding your experience of beauty will expand your experience of surrender.

Another way to invite surrender is to work with the Buddhist practice of Loving Kindness. An ongoing practice of Loving kindness moves your heart into a more loving place, which makes you riper for moments of true compassionate love to come through, which are also moments of surrender.

Living from the big picture can also invite surrender. From the point of view of our deepest being – the ocean of all that is and beyond – we are already everything we may ever trust or distrust. There is nowhere to go and nothing to change, for we are already the totality of all that is. Recognizing this both aligns us with our vastness and relaxes the struggle and resistance that takes us out of surrender. So a practice of living from this big picture can invite surrender.

Many people who can't live from a surrendered place at least get to periodically taste it. They taste it through falling in love. This will have elements of fantasy and projection in it, as well as feelings of attachment and neediness that will be misinterpreted as love, but love will also be there. And where there is love there is surrender – the heart has to really let go. Unfortunately though, as with trust, you can't make yourself be in love. It's either there or it isn't. And unfortunately, being in love usually only lasts a short while, so it becomes a taste rather than an ongoing state of being. But even once the being-in-love passes, if one can filter out all the projections and neediness, just remembering and meditating on the feeling of love, it will keep the sense of surrender close, and surrender will slowly make a bigger space for itself in your heart.

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