

# Don't Make It WORSE (1 of 5) Wait

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So, a warm hello on this Monday. I'm happy to be back after being away for a couple of weeks. I had a very nice time going back to my homeland, Norway, my birth country, and had a wonderful time with my relatives there. I certainly brought my practice with me, but it was more ordinary in the sense that I was not reading Buddhist books or thinking profound Buddhist thoughts or something. It was just living in this present moment as freely and generously as I could.

So following up on that, this week I want to offer something very simple and basic that maybe we don't have to even think of as being Buddhist. It's just a wise way of living. It has to do with a little saying that I'm very fond of – I've certainly mentioned it here on YouTube a few times. The idea is that as you go through your day, especially when things are difficult and confusing, and maybe you don't know exactly what you should be doing or should be saying, a wonderful guideline is: don't make it worse. Whatever is happening, don't make the situation worse.

So if you're angry, be careful. Don't make it worse by speaking angry words so they hurt people or so they sever and ruin relationships we're in, so your words divide rather than unify.

If you don't know what to do, running away may make it worse. Maybe you don't have to know what to do. Maybe that's enough. Just don't make it worse. Sometimes it's so powerful to not make it worse; it gives time to the situation we're in. Rather than filling the time or feeling pressure to react or do something now or say something now, and then later regretting it, we can hold our tongue, and not attack someone or do something that makes it worse. Not going for something that brings us into oblivion, or disconnects us from what's happening, or bypasses what's happening, that in the long term will make it worse.

Whatever it is, don't make it worse. That gives time for something more to happen. So that's going to be the topic for this week: don't make it worse, and how to live with that guideline.

Sometimes I like acronyms because they help us remember and orient us. The W can stand for wait. The O can stand for organize or orient. The R can stand for rest or relax. The S can stand for sense or see. And the E can stand for express, or if you prefer, empathy.

So today it's "wait." Part of not making it worse can be enhanced by understanding the benefits of waiting – of taking time, giving space, giving time for the situation to unfold. I can't count how many times in my life I have not known what to do – sometimes in meditation, sometimes socially, sometimes in figuring things out on my own. I find that if I just wait, something unfolds. Something happens that makes the path forward clear. Sometimes a new thought, or an idea arises that I couldn't have thought about or understood if I was riding tensely on top of the issue, the problem. I had to relax and allow some things to switch and change.

When I wait in conversation, sometimes I feel like, okay, I have an opinion to tell this person. I know what's right. I know what we're supposed to do here. I know how to fix this thing that needs to be fixed. Sometimes I can feel impatience to really assert myself. And I've learned that it's not really useful to act that way and from that motivation. It's useful to wait.

So many times, when I wait, the person I'm with says something, or opens up the door for the conversation to take a different direction. Or they have the understanding that I was going to assert. Or they know how to fix something or do something. And it's such a wonderful, profound experience – at least for me, it feels this way – to have not asserted my solution, my way, and to see how things evolve. I kind of allowed to let the situation

unfold. Sometimes the situation wasn't solved by that, but new information came along that allowed us to figure out what's going to happen, what to do.

Human intelligence and human social interactions do really well sometimes if we give conscious, clear time for things to show themselves, to reveal themselves. Take time for us to see and understand what's happening. And sometimes that can be intentional where we ask questions: Tell me more. I don't understand everything here. Can you explain that in a different way? What do you think? So we're giving time for the other person to speak.

Sometimes if we're alone and have some kind of personal challenge, maybe we give it time. We wait. And the way we do it is to go meditate. I have found that sometimes in my life when I have some tension and pressure, there's a deadline, I have to do something, I can't figure something out, I can feel the tension in my forehead or behind my forehead or different places in my body. And I realize this is making the whole situation worse. So I will go and meditate – sometimes just 10 minutes of sitting quietly, meditating.

Or sometimes I'll go for a walk. Just stepping out of the pressurized time that I was creating for myself into an unpressured time of just going for a walk. Meditating or going for a walk creates a whole different ecosystem. It allows something to shift, and change inside, something to relax and open, gives time for something, some inner process to unfold. When I finish, even after just ten minutes sometimes, there's so much more clarity, so much more understanding. Sometimes it becomes clear what to do in a way that I couldn't see otherwise.

Wait. Don't make it worse. Give time for the situation to clarify itself, to unfold, to become more obvious. Give time so that maybe you understand. Maybe the other person hasn't understood what the confusion is yet. Just wait and give time for that person to find their way with the situation.

So, not making it worse is not only an issue of restraint, staying silent, not blurting out what you want to say, and not doing something that's impulsive. More profoundly, by not making it worse, not giving in to those impulses, there's a kind of sacred waiting. Or, if you don't like the word sacred, there's a kind of generative waiting that says wait, let's see what else wants to unfold here. Let's see what else wants to happen.

Things don't have to happen on the tip of my own assertion, the tip of my own preoccupations, the tip of my own fear or anger or desires that are pushing me or pushing into the present moment in the situation. Relax. Don't have that pointed pressure. Soften. Open. Feel. Sense. See. Wait for a deeper understanding. Wait.

So, don't make it worse. And by not making it worse, give yourself time to have a kind of generative waiting. A kind of exploratory waiting, discovery waiting, a time for intelligence waiting, a time for deeper feeling, to wait to feel, to sense, to know what's happening here.

Wait. That's the W. So today, in the next 24 hours, you might want to give yourself the learning opportunity to spend time allowing more waiting in all kinds of situations. See what you learn, what happens with that. There are so many different things that can happen.

Say, for example, you're waiting in line, you're waiting for something. And you find yourself pulling out your phone to look at the news or email or text or something. You don't want to wait, but you have this time, so you want to do something.

Don't do that. Don't disconnect from your environment. Don't disconnect from yourself. Take the time, when you're waiting for something anyway, to do a generative waiting, a sacred waiting. Allow the waiting. Give space and time to see what else can unfold in just being here, present for your experience.