

Who's driving your bus?

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A couple summers ago I was in Nepal riding a bus. It was a day long trip in a well-worn vehicle (this was no Greyhound), and we began our journey at dawn. This particular ride got off to a slow start, as every 20 minutes the driver would pull over, shut off the engine, walk outside to converse with others, and then slowly make his way back to the driver's seat. Then he would pull over again, shut off the engine again, walk outside to converse with others again, and then slowly make his way back to the driver's seat, again. Then he would pull over yet again, shut off the engine yet...get the idea? Yea, so did I!

After observing this ritual repeated every few miles, it became clear that rather than being some type of mandatory halt, our driver was taking the time to catch up with his friends scattered throughout the city. An hour in and I was quite perturbed...“What is he doing out there? Why is this taking so long?? Are we really stopping again?!” Anger was mounting; I had places to go, and there was no time for social hour in Kathmandu! In desperation I looked around to see if anyone else shared my outrage, but to my surprise, the others were just sitting in their seat looking quite unaffected. Hmm, so what is *my* problem?

I had lost control of the bus. Not the physical bus, but that of my own mind. It was filled with unruly passengers who were clamoring on about how 'this shouldn't be happening!', and they had overtaken the wheel. How to regain control?

In this case, the passengers/thoughts were fueled by resistance. I was resisting the stops as if thinking about them harder could prevent them, which of course only strengthened resistance when we stopped again. Seems silly, I know, but how often do we waste energy resisting what is actually happening?

A new approach was needed: how about acceptance?

Acceptance is not inaction, and it is important to make this distinction. Acceptance in this sense is simply *seeing things as they actually are*. Here, it entails the fact that:

A.) we were stopping frequently, and

B.) resisting 'A' was causing stress

Bringing awareness to my resistance allowed me to accept A&B as they were, and stop wasting energy on my pity party. With a calm mind, I could once again re-claim the driver's seat!

I had two options: attempt to change the situation or live with it. For the former, one option

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would be to get off the bus and try and find another way from whatever city we were in to my destination. Anyone who has experience traveling in a 3rd world country would probably advise against this. Another option would be to try and convince the driver that he should quit stopping. See previous advice.

Ultimately the best choice in this situation was just to accept it as is, without trying to change anything.

While I couldn't control the physical bus, I could inhabit the driver's seat of my own. Freeing myself of this stress then gave my mind space to appreciate those unnoticed moments around me: the sun cascading through the windows and the summer breeze slowly drifting on by...all told, it was a fine day to be riding a bus.