

The Rude Awakening

Awakening to the truth is only the first step. After that initial awakening comes what I often call the rude awakening. The dark side—that which we've kept covered up, that which we've repressed—comes to the foreground. The light of awakening illuminates the darkness, making visible what has been hidden, the parts of ourselves we haven't wanted to see. This can be quite disturbing at first, but it is the necessary beginning of the journey to healing and integration.

Within most people there's a lot of unconscious and sometimes traumatic material that's gone unseen. When you begin to open spiritually, the light of awakening is very bright, but that shadow is also enormous and powerful, and can become much more visible in ways you don't expect. As you open more, you suddenly realize that who you actually are is much bigger than who you thought you were. Now there's much more space in your being. Because there's more space, that which has been stuffed in the closet or crammed in a corner finally has room to move and emerges from the cage where you've hidden it. What has been unconscious—whether repressed, ignored, or just never noticed—suddenly becomes conscious.

This can be very challenging. Often we begin the spiritual path to get away from just that kind of thing, right? But it's how the process works. You just have to hang in there, with compassion, forgiveness, and patience with your human self that's just trying to survive and be comfortable. This is where it's important to allow yourself some softness, some tenderness, some gentle loving kindness. Ease up the screws. Give yourself the space and permission you need to go through whatever you need to.

This is also where having a good body-oriented practice that facilitates grounding is very, very helpful. Expression is also essential. Expressing or voicing the truth of the condition can help that energy move and flow through and out of your body as healthily as

As always, it's important to continually tune in to your experience and be aware of how you're operating. Notice where you're getting in your own way or holding back expansion. By holding back, you may avoid feeling uncomfortable temporarily, but ultimately that energy will move, with or without your cooperation.

An initial awakening can be a very enjoyable experience. That openness, that sense of freedom, is a great relief. So when difficult material like this suddenly begins to emerge, many people lose faith. You thought you were free, but now you're back in the struggle, right? You may feel like you've gone backward, or that you've lost something, or done something wrong.

I have one thing to say: Don't worry! These kinds of developments are not only fine, but entirely to be expected, and are even signs that you're on the right track. This transition can be difficult, but gradually you'll learn how to pay attention to what's happening, how to express it, and how to really feel it. As you become able to truly allow that difficult material to emerge in to awareness, it will actually deepen and strengthen your awakening.

Awakening is a radical change in perspective, and I don't just mean it will give you a better attitude. Who you are and where you're coming from will radically transform. The simplest way to describe it is profound acceptance. Acceptance is not an attitude or an intellectual or even emotional perspective. True acceptance is possible only from the space of awareness.

That's why I emphasize being awareness. As your identity shifts from your limited personal human identity to awareness itself, you finally have the space for that acceptance. Now you can really open to the broken or traumatized parts of yourself and allow them simply to be as they are. Whether or not those parts do heal or transform is secondary. You've taken away that pressure. You no longer have that expectation. Ironically, when you let go of the need for healing to happen, things often change in ways you wouldn't expect.

I'm not saying you shouldn't also explore other methods for addressing these kinds of issues, by the way. Formal mindfulness practice, therapy, various kinds of trauma work—all of these can be very helpful at the right time and with the right framing. As always, explore! Experiment. Find out what works for you.

But I think the most powerful approach is simply to be with what is, as it is, from the perspective of your true self. You won't necessarily heal right away, but by allowing deeply, you set the stage for healing to happen.

The more I tune in to my body, the more I realize I've spent a lifetime avoiding it. Now the more I open up, the more pain I realize I've kept down and will have to experience now. That prospect is so scary that I find myself shutting down again, wanting to disconnect completely.

I understand. Fear is an intense emotion, maybe the most intense of all emotions. It can feel like it's just too much, that it will overwhelm you.

When you're faced with that kind of energy, that kind of intensity, the first thing to do is get yourself grounded. Sit so that your feet are flat on the ground, and place your hands on your legs. That will help your body be a better channel for all that energy. Feel your hands on your legs, feel your legs on the chair, and feel your breath moving in, moving out. Let your body settle.

Fear is often an indicator that opening wants to happen, so bringing awareness to the fear may reveal what's underneath it, wanting to emerge. A lot can be stored in the nervous system, but as we learn to relax and allow, all will transform, brighten, and expand. It could be a bumpy road, but that's why Rumi said,

You should wish to have a hundred thousand sets of moth wings, so you could burn them away, one set a night.

It's all fuel for the fire. All these conditions are just parts of us that need to be reclaimed, reintegrated back into essence.

I want to emphasize yet again that awakening is not a location or accomplishment. Awakening is ongoing. It's literally what we are in our essence. You don't get balanced; you are balancing. You don't awaken; you are awakening. You don't get healed; you are healing. Along the path there will be very, very pleasant experiences and probably some less pleasant experiences as well—some difficult, cathartic movements.

As the process deepens, though, you'll find that whatever is happening, it just gets better and better. I'm not saying you'll get to a point where you have no problems on a human level—that you'll never have health issues, relationship problems, or financial difficulties again. There will always be things in life that are challenging and difficult, but how you relate to and experience those things will be completely transformed.

Bernie, Jon. *The Unbelievable Happiness of What Is: Beyond Belief to Love, Fulfillment, and Spiritual Awakening* (pp. 167-168). New Harbinger Publications. Kindle Edition.