



SOLVING YOUR PROBLEMS WON'T HURT, EITHER

(And it's easier when you drop resistance)

Throughout *Falling Awake* is the idea that we can create the life of our dreams no matter what our circumstances. We can have a great life even when we don't have all the money, time, relationships, or experiences we want. From this point of view, a great life is not about freedom from problems; it's about simply loving whatever problems arise.

This idea is powerful—except when it isn't.

Look, folks, this whole “having a wonderful life doesn't depend on circumstances” thing is just an idea. Life is larger than logic, and any idea has limits.

Yes, it's often true that we can be happy no matter what our circumstances and love our problems no matter what they are. And yet love may not be enough. Sometimes the most direct path to creating the life of our dreams is to move beyond loving a problem and start taking action.

Negative feelings are often a wake-up call, a pointer to something that needs doing or a circumstance that needs changing. For instance, regret is a natural accompaniment to breaking a promise, telling a lie, or doing something else that's inconsistent with our values. Depression might be linked to letting others take advantage of us. Irritability might be associated with harboring a grudge against another. Loneliness can be the result when we refuse to say what we're really thinking and feeling.

In each case, we can take some kind of action to clean up our circumstances. We may need to make amends, apologize, pay off a debt, or set personal boundaries and be more assertive. All these strategies can pave the way for more happiness.

Remember that loving a problem is not the same as being resigned to it. We can love the dirty kitchen walls even as we paint them a new color. We can love our old job even as we change careers. We can remain friends with a former partner even as we seek a divorce. We can accept and love ourselves even as we work like mad to change our behavior.

While we're busy changing our circumstances, we can still drop our resistance to problems and practice moving toward love.



Be your own mentor

When we look back into the past and befriend our younger selves, we can find it easier to love ourselves in the present. In addition, we can learn lessons that can help guide our choices in the future.

Think back to a time in your life when you were faced with a problem. You might choose a time when you were young and afraid, or when you were struggling with a choice that was a major turning point in your life.

Now pretend that you can return to that time, and describe it in detail. How old were you? Who else was involved? Where did this event occur? What sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or physical sensations do you remember?

In your imagination, be who you are now, with all your hard-earned wisdom and experience. Then have a conversation with the person you were back then. Consider recording this dialogue on paper or an audiocassette. What insights or understandings can you share with your younger self? What can you teach yourself? How can you help your younger self have a different experience? Can you listen to your younger self in a way that nobody was able to at the time? What have you learned that will help your younger self get through this experience in a way that has a more favorable outcome?

In the space below, complete the following sentences.

In meeting my younger self, I discovered that I ...

After coaching my younger self, I intend to ...
