

Why “Should” On Yourself? By Alena Gerst, LMSW, RYT

Do you ever have those moments when you feel like you *should* go to the gym or take a yoga class, but you really don't *want* to? Or you should order the salad but you *really* want the burger and fries? For me, working on not "shoulding" on myself has been a key part of my own practice (yoga practice, life practice...) for many years.

In yoga, we refer to a restful seated pose called *Nispanda Bhava* (Unmoving Observation) as one way to practice being witness to our inner chatter and "shoulds", without in any way becoming involved in them or acting on them. As a student and teacher of yoga, health, and wellness, I've noticed that operating under the dictum "should" is not always good for us in the long run, and practicing the principle of Unmoving Observation can help us ease up. Often times, when we **lighten up** and **let life be more dynamic** and less static, surprising things can happen!

Case in point: My best friend was telling me about a phase her toddler went through where she became obsessed with eating dirt. Now this friend is very much a "live and let live" sort of person, but she was becoming very concerned with her daughter's latest culinary choice; on top of that, she was frustrated that her child was resisting her requests to stop. She described how she was almost observing herself as she would a stranger, aggressively washing her daughter's mouth out, and feeling surprising and unexpected levels of anger at the situation.

Ultimately, she decided there had to be another way. She had the dirt in her yard tested for toxins (came up negative), and decided to go ahead and let her daughter eat the dirt. She made a **shift in her mind from resistance to allowance**, and before she knew it, the little girl no longer had an interest in eating dirt and she happily (and healthfully) moved on to the next phase of toddlerhood.

All of this is to say that your body's intelligence will tell you what it needs. Sometimes what we need is indeed a good stretch, a long walk, a big salad, or a nap. And sometimes, we need something that is not necessarily what we would consider "healthy", like a late night out with friends, skipping our workout and resting, a delicious dessert, or dirt!

Living healthfully is not about depriving, but about listening to our body's needs in a way that is open-minded, compassionate, and creative. Because what you truly need is not always what the experts recommend...**what you truly need is**

between you and your body, and the best way to find that is through observation.

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