

# ACCEPTANCE

## On not taking in annoyances

# 2 - MINUTE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES





## **Imagine blue apples**

Imagine someone told you that the best apples in the world were blue.

Imagine you told them, “In my experience, apples are never blue.”

Imagine they continued, a bit outraged even, admonishing you for your naivete.

I imagine you would allow them to persist in their folly. What is the point of arguing with a fool?

## **Imagine you are cheese**

Imagine someone told you that you aren't a person, but a glob of cheese.

I would imagine it would play out similarly to the above.

## **Why is it different when someone tries to put their anger (or other crap) onto you?**

Someone taking out their negative emotions on you is not different. It only feels like it is. You really don't need to take it is anymore than you have to believe they enjoy blue apples or that you are coagulated and compressed milk curds.

## A story I learned from my dear Buddhist friend, Nagy

A woman's son left her to become one of the Buddha's disciples. She confronted the Buddha and showered him with great anger because she was a widow, and her son had been her sole source of support. She poured out a great, virulent wrath in the Buddha's face.

The monks watching were shocked that the Buddha said nothing to defend himself. After all, her son was taking active steps in the path towards the liberation – couldn't she understand that?

When the woman left, they asked why he listened, did nothing, and, seemingly, took the abuse.

The Buddha said two things:

1. She was suffering, and we must show compassion for all who suffer.
2. I did not have to accept her "gifts."

### Note

The story ends with the Buddha telling the son to go and take care of his mother and that he could always return to being a monk.

## **Advice**

Isn't that advice of the Buddha's something that we all know? We can be compassionate, and, at the same time, we needn't accept other people's crap.

People only attack us when they feel their suffering is too great to shoulder.

If we can understand this, then we need not take their gifts.

## With a tissue

I often teach this lesson in classrooms like this:



I blow my nose into a tissue and then offer it to someone.

“Do you want this?” I ask.

They say no.

This is similar to a situation in which someone offers their anger or an insult or anything else you don’t want to take on.

We don’t need to accept the “gifts.”

(While it probably needn’t be said, I will point out that responding to anger or insults with anger or insults is not the best path.)

I do this most easily with my own children. I can (often) compassionately listen to them rail against me. My daughter shouting, “I hate you. You are the worst dad in the whole entire world!” doesn’t throw my day off so much. I listen and allow her to vent. It’s more difficult to do this with my wife (of 18 years!). I am certain you, too, have people in your life whose ire you can take in greater and lesser degrees. Nonetheless, this is a skill we all must cultivate. We all need to learn that we don’t need to accept the “gifts.”

**CAN YOU GET YOUR MIND AROUND THE IDEA  
THAT ANYONE WHO GETS ANGRY AT YOU OR IS  
INSULTING TO YOU IS SIMPLY GIVING YOU GIFTS  
YOU DON’T NEED?**

What to do today

## **ACCEPTANCE**

**Carry a crumpled tissue with you to remind you that you need not take “the gifts.”**